7 Beyond Good and Evil

Moral virtue as means and as ends
by Piya Tan ©2006

1 Buddhism and liberation

1.1 GOOD IS WHAT WE THINK IT IS?

1.1.1 There seems to be a tendency amongst certain guru figures in cults and religious circles who see themselves as "highly attained," or who are charismatically attributed such states by their adoring followers or the uninformed public, so that they regard themselves above conventional morality and spiritual standards, that these persons transcend all moral ethics.

In short, they think or are thought to be "beyond good and evil."[1] In more anarchic or worldly manifestations of contemporary Buddhism, their leading actors, so busily involved in worldly affairs (such as social work, religious rituals, and simonizing), although highly respected or feared by their followers, really give little or no thought at all to what is good or evil, or have double standards. At best, for them, good works are a ritual for maintaining their status, influence and wealth rather than as a means for self-betterment.

1.1.2 Good works may benefit many—but do good works liberate us or do they further imprison us in this world? The world generally is moved by good, but it is more often moved by appearances; as such, the world is easily misled and exploited in the name of good and religion. Indeed, good works sometimes consciously or unconsciously reinforce even the Tartuffes' or zealots' delusion that they are actually better than those they "help" (as is often the case in missionary "relief work").

1.1.3 Although **the Vāseṭṭha Sutta** (M 98 = Sn 3.9) states that we are what we do (action-wise and work-wise),[2] it does not teach that we are liberated by our works, nor by those of others. Simply being "good" is a start, but it is not good enough: it is like having started the car engine, one simply leaves it idle, without moving on in one's journey towards the destination. Only when we make that inward journey that good becomes a fuel for self-realization

1.1.4 To the world, that is, in popular opinion, good is what good does, or more correctly, good seems to be what we think it is. Apparently, for the gullible, the devoutly faithful, the politically correct and the politically inclined, the *appearance* of being good is in itself good enough. On a more serious level, this is like believing that *it is good enough to look healthy,* but it does not matter whether we are really very unhealthy, and not to work towards better health.

Yet, good health is in itself of instrumental value: its goodness depends on what we do with it. If a healthy person were to kill, rob, rape or cheat others, obviously he is abusing a wonderful asset. In other words, good health has a higher purpose: that of working for the wellbeing of oneself, of others, and of the environment.

1.1.5 The Buddhist viewpoint is very clear: good karma may bring us to heaven, but never to nirvana. To attain nirvana, we need more than good karma, but this "more than" is not quantitative, but qualitative. The secret of truly doing good is learning to let go of it: a good act is selfless. A good deed has no centre and yet is all encompassing, at least in spirit. To truly do good we must be able to let it go,

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[1] Amongst those who proposed that ethics is transcended by knowledge is **Sally A Wang,** who in "Can man go beyond ethics? The system of Padmasambhava" (*Journal of Religious Ethics* 3,1 1975:141-155), states that although "Buddhism does possess a set of ethics in the Ten Precepts…these were intended to be binding on the unenlightened, ie the mental children" (1975:142) and she unpersuasively argues in regards to Tantric Buddhism that "Nothing is forbidden to those giants ['the lawless *siddhas*'] of transcendental wisdom" (1975:150) For other such examples, see Keown 1992:12 f. **Stuart Lachs** cautions us: "The well known Chinese *Ch'an* teacher, Master Sheng-yen also said of the Zen Master, 'it should be remembered that the mind of the master is ever pure... and even if the master tells lies, steals, and chases women..., he is still to be considered a true master as long as he scolds his disciples for their transgressions.'" (1999:2) [Stated in a public talk given at his Dharma Drum Mountain Center, later published in his Center's newsletter, *Ch'an Newsletter* 38, 1984:1-2: http://www.chan1.org/ddp/channews/07-1984.html]

[2] M 98,10-61/2:196 = Sn 3.9/612-654/119-123 @ SD 37.1

but what is there to let go off if we have not done enough good? In this sense, *we have to let go of good karma, what more of bad karma!*[3]

1.1.6 In this paper, we will examine the vital role of moral virtue (*sīla*) in Buddhist philosophy and spiritual training, and that while it is an important "stage" in the threefold training of moral virtue, mental concentration and wisdom, it does not end there, but is contiguous with the other two stages. The thoughts behind this paper have been deeply inspired by a number of interesting articles, especially these three important works on Buddhist ethics in our times: **Y Karunadasa's** University of London lecture entitled "The Moral Life: Both as a Means and an End" (1983), **Damien Keown's** classic *The Nature of Buddhist Ethics* (1992), and **David Loy's** essay, "The nonduality of good and evil: Buddhist reflections on the new holy war" (2003).[4]

1.1.7 Amongst the world's living religion, indeed, in the history of religion and human thought, Buddhism —as far as we can reconstruct as the Buddha's own teachings—gives the seeker total spiritual freedom, both as the tool as well as the goal. As a tool, the practitioner has a choice of freedom: that of the householder's happiness, or that of the renunciant's happiness; and as the goal, either happiness (lay or renunciant) leads to total spiritual freedom.

> *Seyyathā pi…mahā,samuddo eka,raso loṇa,raso, evam evaṁ kho…ayaṁ dhamma,vinayo eka,raso vimutti,raso.*

Just as the great ocean has one taste, that is, the taste of salt, even so this Dharma,vinaya [Teaching-and-Discipline] has one taste, that is, the taste of freedom.
                    (V 4:203; **Uposatha Sutta,** U 56; cf Nm 1:131-134; Pm 1:134; DA 1:16)

1.2 GOOD AND GOD

1.2.1 As a method for spiritual development, Buddhism is a path of freedom in the sense that we begin to be truly free when we are free to seek truth for ourselves, and to free ourselves from the self. There are two kinds of self (or "soul" idea) we have to free ourselves from: the "internal self" and the "external self". The internal self is the notion that we are always right and good, that there is no need to better ourselves: this might be also called the "guru self."

The external self is the view that there is an external force or being that can somehow "empower" or save us. The point is that we have moved our "locus of power" (to use a popular expression) outside of ourselves. We have surrendered self-accountability or personal responsibility to someone else. In crude terms, this is like signing a blank cheque, and giving it to a cult guru.

1.2.2 The Buddha's message is very simple: we can save ourselves. We can also help others along the way. But if we are hungry, we have to feed ourselves; if we are sick, we must take the medicine ourselves. Even the best chefs or the best doctors would not be able to help us if we do not ourselves eat or take the medicine. Then again, being physically healthy is just half the story: the more important half is being mentally healthy.

1.2.3 All the Buddhist teachings are tools for mental health. They are heuristic tools, skillful means of self-discovery, like tools, such as fire, the wheel, or machines, or scientific instruments, such as the microscope, the telescope or the ultrasound scanner, are beneficial only when properly used. All such tools were discovered or invented, and continue to be discovered and invented, so long as there is a sense of lack and need: necessity is the mother of invention. But these are merely tools, and worshipping tools do not make them work. No matter how much we worship a rock, a piece of wood, a hammer or even a super-computer, it can do nothing for us.

Similarly, the teachings and tools of religion, be they spirits, gods, God or some nameless power, they have not helped and cannot really help anyone no matter how much prayer and sacrifices are offered to them. At best, they are the hypostatization or personification of one's faith; at worst, they are the tools for mustering power: for control, domination and mass destruction.

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[3] The orig Alagaddûpama S saying is: "You should abandon even the dharmas, how much more that which is not dharmas!" (M 22.14/1:135) & SD 3.13 (3).

[4] See also Daniel C Dennett, *Darwin's Dangerous Ideas,* NY: Simon & Schuster, 1995:481-493.

1.2.4 Apparently, the more gods a religion has the more tolerant and humane it is. The fewer gods a religion has, the less tolerant it is likely to be, and the most intolerant are generally those that have only one god. A study of the theogonies of various religions and mythologies is instructive here: it shows how the gods of the polytheistic systems rise and fade away. People create their own gods or God, who only thrive as long as they are worshipped. Often, as in the Greek religions and the Chinese religions—indeed, in all god-centred religions—their theogonies, as a rule, reflect their political and social struggles, and mirror their society.

In a theistic religion, especially a monotheistic religion, its ethics and values are god-centred, not human-centred. If a god or God comes first, surely humans and other lives are less valuable, or derive their value from, that is, they are secondary to, their creator. In short, moral accountability has little or no role in the believer's life.

A fanatical believer could mass murder non-believers or opponents without compunction. The religious suicide bombers and mass murderers of history stand as clear testimonies to this total lack of personal accountability, claiming they are directed by "God's will."

1.2.5 A key moral problem of the God-religions is clearly stated by the Buddha in **the Titth'āyatana Sutta** (A 3.61), prophetically as it were, thus:

3   (b) Then, monks, I approached those recluses and brahmins who held that "Whatever a person experiences…all that is caused by **God's creation**" and said to them: "Is it true, as they say, that you venerable sirs teach and hold *such a view*?"
Being asked thus by me, they said, "Yes."
Then I said this to them, "In that case, venerable sirs, due to God's creation,
there will be those who harm life,
there will be those who take the not-given,
there will be those who are incelibate [ie who break the rule of celibacy],
there will be speakers of false speech,
there will be speakers of divisive speech,
there will be speakers of harsh speech,
there will be speakers of useless talk,
there will be the covetous,
there will be the malevolent,
there will be those with false views.[5]
Furthermore, monks, one who falls back on God's creation as the decisive factor will lack the desire and effort for doing this and not doing that. Since one lacks true and solid ground for doing or not doing something, one dwells confused and unwary—such a one cannot with justice [in accordance with Dharma] call oneself "recluse."   (A 3.61.3/1:174) = SD 6.8

The point here is that once we surrender our self-accountability to an external agency, we tend to attribute most, if not all, our actions (actions, speech and thoughts) to that agency. A person who is able to display some kind of proximity or favour with such an agency would be having *charisma*, that is, various characteristics, powers and abilities would be attributed to him. Such leaders often become cult figures whose word is law, whose actions are beyond blame, and, often enough, whose physical being is regarded as holy.

Understandably such a perception becomes an avenue for various problems, such as, funds mismanagement, power struggle, and abuses of the cult followers by the cult leader. They are caught in unwholesome courses of action. Such religions, in the end, show that they are not about good or salvation, much less about tolerance and compassion, but they are about dominating others.

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[5] In **Deva,daha S** (M 101) the Buddha uses other arguments to counter the Jain notion that everything we experience are due to past karma.

2 Buddhism as a non-theistic religion

2.1 NOT BLACK AND WHITE, BUT A SERIES OF SHADES

2.1.1 Buddhism is a non-theistic religion in the sense that the gods or God, the devas and the Brahmas, do not have any role at all in one's spiritual salvation. Since whatever exists must exist within samsara, even heavenly beings no matter how powerful or conceived in whatever way, are impermanent. As such, even these beings (if they exist) are themselves in need of spiritual liberation from samsara.

The most significant points should be noted here are:

(1) To exist is to change. All beings, insofar as they have any meaningful existence, including the gods or God, are part of the cosmic life cycle or samsara, and to exist is to be impermanent.

(2) All beings can attain salvation. In the creator-centred religions as we have them today, only human beings, or more correctly, only certain human beings (the selection depends on who defines "God"), are "saved" or have a chance of having some kind of happiness. In Buddhism, *all beings* have the potential of attaining the highest liberation, for even the heavens and the hells, indeed, all existence, are impermanent.

(3) We do not need a God-idea to be good. If moral virtue is defined as those qualities essential for happiness here and hereafter, early Buddhism is unique in being a religion (or salvific system) that teaches that true moral virtue, that is, personal accountability and wise compassion, can only exist without a God-idea, especially where God's will plays a significant role.

(4) Good and evil are mind-made. While it is true that good and evil are relative to the society and cultures that uphold them, it is also true that *good and evil are mind-made,* meaning that one is as one thinks. If good and evil are relative, then it can be said that the truly liberated is "beyond good and evil." It is this last idea that forms the main thesis for our discussion here.

2.1.2 However, to stop at saying that good and evil are relative to one another, is to advocate some sort of moral relativism, which is as good as saying there is really no good and evil. On the other extreme, there is the view that everything is either black or white, *either* good *or* evil: this is moral absolutism.

A major problem here is who is to rightly define what is good and what is evil. Any such definition can only be arbitrary and limited if they do not reflect true reality. We shall look at his problem in greater detail below. In either case, whether it is moral relativism or moral absolutism, they are all conventional labels.

2.2 GOING BEYOND LABELS

2.2.1 To be an awakened Buddhist is to go beyond labels, that is, to transcend categories, especially dichotomies of happiness and sorrow, pleasure and pain, good and evil, I and thou, my Buddhism and your Buddhism. Even on an everyday level, the spirit of this profound truth can be appreciated. It is self-contradictory to say speak of "Buddhist" charity, "Buddhist" compassion, "Buddhist" wisdom, "Buddhist" nirvana, etc. It cannot be true charity if it is "Buddhist" charity, for then it is limited and self-motivated. It cannot be true wisdom if it is "Buddhist," for then it is not a universal truth. It cannot be "Buddhist" nirvana, for it is beyond any category.

2.2.2 We create the labels; in reality, there are none. To label things is to name them, which otherwise in their natural state are nameless. Such a labelling allows us to think and talk about things, but *the name is not the thing named.* We speak of earth, water, fire and wind as being the "four elements," but they are not separate elements at all, but phases of matter. They are certainly not "Buddhist" elements, as they have been around long before Buddhism (or any religion) arose. Buddhism merely points in their direction.

3 Buddhism: evil vs bad

3.1 SOUTHWOLD'S TERMINOLOGY

3.1.1 The ethnographer,[6] **Martin Southwold,** in his paper, "Buddhism and evil" (1985), has a useful discussion on the Buddhist conception of good and evil. In academic terms, he argues), using Grayston's distinction between descriptive and moral evil (as applied to early Hebrew literature),[7] that "[t]here are some concepts of evil in Buddhism; but there is no concept of evil in the strongest and most distinctive sense in which we use this term" (1985:124).

3.1.2 Southwold distinguishes a weak and a strong sense of moral evil, and notes that the strong sense of moral evil is not found in Buddhism, but seems to be associated historically with some forms of monotheism. **L S Cousins,** at the end of his paper, "Good or skillful? *Kusala* in Canon and Commentary" (1996), summarizes and endorses Southwold's thesis:

> In an interesting paper Martin Southwold discusses the question as to whether Buddhism possesses a concept of evil [1983]. He adapts Grays[t]on's distinction between descriptive and moral evil (applied to early Hebrew literature)[8] to the Buddhist context and distinguishes a weak and a strong sense in the case of moral evil. I agree with him that the strong sense is not found in Buddhism; it seems to be associated historically with some forms of monotheism. The distinction between the descriptive and the moral can, I suggest, be applied equally to *puñña*. The descriptive meaning alone can be found in the earliest Indian literature; essentially *puñña* and *pāpa* are simply that which causes happiness or harm respectively.   (Cousins 1996:155 f)

3.1.3 Southwold's distinction between the "weak" and "strong" senses of evil is useful in our understanding of early Buddhist ethics. Here are the salient excerpts from his paper:

> As an ethical term, "evil" sorts with a family of such terms, eg "immoral," morally "bad" or "wrong," "wicked," "sinful." In the weak sense, "evil" is no stronger in condemnation than these, is effectively synonymous and interchangeable with at least some of them. This sense is plain in the common expressions "good and evil," applied particularly to acts…. The term "evil" here has the same wide scope as "bad": whatever is not good (and not neutral).
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> In a strong sense, however, evil is far from synonymous with "bad," etc: it expresses condemnation that is markedly more severe [such as "what the Nazis did at Auschwitz and elsewhere in pursuit of their Final Solution"]. If we order wrongdoings of a scale of gravity or heinousness, the range of application of "evil" tends towards the graver end….
>
> There is plainly a notable difference between the weak and strong senses of "evil" as an ethical term. There is a simple test to distinguish between them: where we encounter the term "evil," can we, or can we not, substitute such other terms as "bad" or "immoral" without loss of meaning? ….
>
> We should understand other cultures, and indeed our own, better if we gave up using the misleading term "evil," or at least always qualified it. Instead of "evils" in the descriptive sense we might speak of "afflictions"; for "evil" in the weak ethical sense we should substitute the term "immoral," morally "wrong" or "bad." I want to keep "evil" in the strong sense, the better to point to the problem that arise: I shall therefore specify this as "radical evil."[9]
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> (Southwold 1985:131 f; emphases added)

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[6] An ethnographer specializes in the study of the distribution of cultures and how they interact with their environments.

[7] Kenneth Grayston, "Evil" in Alan Richardson (ed), *A Theological Word Book of the Bible,* London: SCM Press, 1950.

[8] Kenneth Grayston, 1950: see prec n.

[9] WD O'Flaherty, however, disagrees with Southwold, choosing to tr *pāpa* as "evil" (1976:4, 7).

3.1.4 According to Southwold, the notion of "**radical evil**"[10] is notably associated with demonology, with its host of malignant beings [5.1], and goes on to mention this important characteristic:

> The radical evil is that which must not be condoned or admitted to compromise: and since we must oppose it, this is indeed fighting talk. My own very restricted explorations do indeed indicate <u>a strong association of notions of radical evil with war</u>. They seem to be favoured by the militarist and the bellicose, and <u>the categorization of adversaries as evil</u> is unmistakably a call to arms.   (Southwold 1983:132; emphases added)

This characteristic of radical evil, as we shall see, will be more fully developed by David Loy on a socio-political level [4.1].

3.2 TRADITIONAL THERAVADA VIEW OF EVIL

3.2.1   Southwold's fieldwork was done in Sri Lanka in 1983,[11] but his findings generally reflect the reality of most traditional Theravada Buddhists. Southwold observes that evil is somewhat differently perceived amongst Sinhalese Theravada Buddhists in two major ways, that is, as perceived in what he calls "Meditation Buddhism" and in "Ministry Buddhism." These two groups, according to Southwold, differ from one another "in rather basic ways":

> In what I have termed <u>Meditation Buddhism</u>, the goal is to attain Nirvana soon; this is to be done by withdrawing from the world and pursuing a life of austerity and intense meditation; it is assumed that this can hardly be done except by members of the Sangha, or in monasteries or clergy, and among these only by "forest monks" (see Carrithers 1983),[12] living in monasteries or as hermits in the wilderness. In what I have I have termed <u>Ministry Buddhism</u>, Nirvana is an ultimate goal, not to be attained in ordinary time; the vocation of clergy is to serve the laity, especially by teaching, contributing thereby to their own spiritual progress as well as of those they serve.
> (Southwold 1983:129; emphases added)

3.2.2   A very important distinction noticed by Southwold is that in the Christian conception of evil, it is assumed "that the wrongdoer and the victim are different persons; and the harm that people anticipate from wrongdoing is mainly harm to others."[13] Such a notion, Southwold notices, is absent from the Sinhalese Buddhists: <u>the absence of "radical evil."</u> This is because Buddhists as a rule do not blame others for their sufferings, and regard karma as self-inflicted.

3.2.3   This is not to say that the notion of "radical evil" is totally absent from early Buddhism. In Buddhist text and writings, "radical evil" is notably used in reference to the mythological figure of Māra the evil one (*pāpimā*) (Southwold 1983:134). Southwold makes this helpful observation:

> On the basis of my observation, I can say that the figure of Māra is more familiar to villagers than Ling's account[14] suggests. He is mentioned in sermons, but is most familiar from imagery: notably in the statues and pictures in many temples which present Buddhist themes to the public in visual form. Pictures of him are also quite common on postcards, religious picture books and book illustrations.
>
> But it would be a gross error to infer from this that Māra the evil one is a significant element in the religion of ordinary Buddhists. He is hardly ever spoken of, except by clergy in sermons and by people actually seeing his image in a temple. Nothing suggests to me that anyone imag-

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[10] Colloquially, this translates as "rotten to the core."

[11] Lasting just over a year, conducted in the Kurunegala District; more details in M Southwold, *Buddhism in Life,* Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983.

[12] Michael Carrithers, *The Forest Monks of Sri Lanka.* Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983.

[13] Here Southworld is referring to Kenneth Grayston, "Evil" in Alan Richardson (ed), *A Theological Word Book of the Bible,* London: SCM Press, 1950.

[14] TO Ling 1962:43, 51 f, 61 f, 73, 75.

ines he might actually encounter Māra; on the contrary, Māra is simply a stock character in the
scene of an event of long ago in the experience of that superhuman person, the Buddha.

(Southwold 1983:135)

3.3 INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL SOURCES OF EVIL

3.3.1 James W Boyd, in his comparative study of *Satan and Māra: Christian and Buddhist Symbols
of Evil* (1975), cautions us on proper terminology:

> The rendering of the Pali and Buddhist Sanskrit term *pāpa* as "evil" is not done without hesita-
> tion, for though the English term "evil" is an accepted rendering…it runs the risk of retaining
> implicit Christian meanings which do not necessarily belong to the Buddhist understanding of
> *pāpa.*   (Boyd 1975:73n)

3.3.2 Boyd remarks that "The basic meaning of the term *pāpa*, therefore, most probably is that which
is essentially miserable, full of suffering, and inferior" (1975:157). After showing how the meaning of
pāpa contracts with connotations of the English term "evil," he suggests that the term "bad" may be a
better rendering than "evil," as "The English word 'bad' in contemporary usage does not as readily carry
the moralistic and strong malignant connotations as does the term 'evil'" (Boyd 1975:158).

3.3.3 Boyd goes on to usefully show an important difference between the Christian and the Buddhist
conceptions of evil. For Buddhists, the source of *pāpa* or moral evil is within the person himself (in his
own actions), but for Christians, the source of *ponēros* (evil) is external to man (as sin and the satan).
"The early Christians understood the nature of *ponēros* to be ultimately an extrinsic power foreign and
hostile to the rightful conditions of human existence." As such, there is a "difference between the Christ-
ian affirmation and the Buddhist rejection of the externality of the source of 'evil'…" (Boyd 1975:159-
161).

Buddhists as such are reminded to see the roots of wrongdoing as being within themselves:

Attānā'va kataṁ pāpaṁ	By self indeed is evil done,[15]
atta,jaṁ atta,sambhavaṁ	it is self-born, arising from oneself:
abhimanthati dummedhaṁ	evil grinds the foolish
vajiraṁ v'asmamayaṁ maṇiṁ	just as a diamond grinds a gem. (Dh 161)

3.3.4 In other cultures, where demonology is strong, the sources of evil are located outside of our-
selves, often as external occult agencies. In such a scheme of things, bad or evil is then seen as being alien
to themselves and as possessing the evil-doer, which as such is to be destroyed or at least exorcised.
Hence, Southwold concludes his paper,

> …radical evil is associated with demonology, which itself is associated with theism…the concept
> of radical evil seems to be more closely associated with monotheism [3.1].[16] Monotheism seems
> to me to be quite strongly associated with, as both cause and effect, with intolerance. What is it
> that associates both of these with the Middle East, while both, with their bedfellow radical evil,
> are virtually absent from India?[17] Could it be that the much-maligned caste system, by producing
> a series of closed but interdependent communities, gives rise to polytheism and religious plural-
> ism, hence the religious tolerance and the self-awareness that find no place for radical evil?

(Southwold 1983:139 f)

3.4 REVIVING "BAD" AND "BADS"

3.4.1 In literature and most non-technical writing, words often mean as their authors intend them or
unseen meanings or turns are teased out by the genius of a critic or a reader. Dictionaries do not always

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[15] While it is true that one is accountable for one's own actions, one could, esp on account of latent tendencies, be
motivated by others to commit evil, too: see eg **(Kamma,vāda) Bhūmija S** (S 12.25/2:37-41), SD 31.2.

[16] First pointed out to Southwold by Prof Roy Wallis in Belfast. (Southwold's fn)

[17] WD O'Flaherty, however, disagrees with Southwold, choosing to tr *pāpa* as "evil" (1976:4, 7).

have the final say in the definitions of words and usages, as they are mostly a record of how we use words and language. We write the dictionaries, not the dictionaries us.

 We must especially understand this when we need to clearly express terms and ideas that are central, even unique, to Buddhism. Furthermore, modern English is still very much rooted in Judaeo-Christian ideology and terminology, even though most of our words have been secularized, universalized, or at least dechristianized. However, a few common religious terms still bear the burden of a theistic baggage which may hinder the proper progress of understanding key Buddhist ideas, especially for the sake of our true practice and spiritual health.

 3.4.2 In recent years, a number of concerned Buddhist scholars have voiced out that translating *pāpa* or *akusala* as "evil" is simply unreflective of Buddhist realities [3.3]. As this is a common term we often use when we think and speak of Buddhism and act Buddhist, we need to define, at least refine, this term for our purposes. I happily accept the advice of concerned scholars who suggest the use of "bad" as a or the translation of *pāpa* (we should not have any problem rendering *akusala* as "unwholesome" or "un-skillful").

 Māra has been called "the evil one" (*pāpimā*), but he is properly "the bad one." This buddhicized appellation is not problematic, as it is in the singular and is an adjective. Even when "bad" is used as a noun, it sounds sensible, such as "the avoiding of all bad" (Dh 183a), as here "bad" is an uncountable noun. However, we need to get used to the plural noun, "bads," such as where we refer to the three universal realities of "decay, disease and death," as "the 3 great bads" (rather than "the 3 great evils").[18]

 3.4.3 In fact, "bads" as a plural noun is not a neologism, but an archaicism recorded in the OED, which gives us these citations:

> **2 n** (with *pl*) A bad thing, quality. etc; *rarely,* a bad person. (Not in ordinarty speech.)
> **1592** LYLY *Mydas* V i 57 An inventorie of all Motto's moveable baddes and goods. **1586** WARNER *Alb Eng* III xiv 65 That of two bads, for betters choyse he backe againe did goe. **1602** *Ibid* X lvii (1612) 252 For Popes be impudent, and bads their bleasings neuer mis. **1869** RUSKIN *Q of Air* §125 But, a sthere is this true relation between money and 'goods,' or good things, so there is a false relation between money and 'bads,' or bad things.   (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed, 1989 (digital): sv bad (B2))

 We get used to the face of language by constantly looking at it. It is the thought behind the words that really matter. In this way, we properly define our terms as we would have them.

4 The non-duality of good and evil
4.1 "RADICAL EVIL"
 4.4.1 Earlier on [3.1], Southwold pointed out how the notion of "**radical evil**"[19] is closely associated with demonology, with its host of malignant beings [5.1], and he goes on to mention this important characteristic:

> The radical evil is that which must not be condoned or admitted to compromise: and since we must oppose it, this is indeed fighting talk. My own very restricted explorations do indeed indicate <u>a strong association of notions of radical evil with war</u>. They seem to be favoured by the militarist and the bellicose, and <u>the categorization of adversaries as evil</u> is unmistakably a call to arms.   (Southwold 1983:132; emphases added)

4.4.2 Dualistic approach
 4.4.2.1 **David Loy** discusses the problem of evil on a sociopolitical level in a number of his writings [2002a, 2002b, 2003]. Reflecting on the roots and nature of suicide bombings, religious terrorism, and geopolitics of the early 21st century, Loy presents his thesis as follows:

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[18] See eg **Mada S** (A 3.39) @ SD 42.13 esp (1.3).
[19] Colloquially, this translates as "rotten to the core."

one of the main causes of evil in this world has been human attempts to eradicate evil, or what has been viewed as evil. In more Buddhist terms, much of the world's suffering has been a result of our way of thinking about good and evil.   (Loy 2003:124)

4.4.2.2 This thesis, on a more fundamental and universal scale, is in fact formulated in **the Kaccā-(ya)na,gotta Sutta** (S 12.15) by the Buddha, thus:

4   "This world, Kaccāna, mostly[20] depends upon a duality: upon [the notion of] existence and [the notion of] non-existence.[21]
5   But for one who sees **the arising of the world**[22] as it really is with right wisdom, there is [no notion of] non-existence regarding the world.
And for one who sees **the ending of the world** as it really is with right wisdom, there is no notion of existence regarding the world.[23]
6a   This world, Kaccāna, is mostly bound by fixation [attachment], clinging and inclination.[24]
6b   But this person (with right view) does not engage in, cling to, incline towards that fixation and clinging, the latent tendency of mindset and inclination—he does not take a stand (that anything is) 'my self'.[25]
He has neither uncertainty nor doubt that what arises is only suffering arising, what ceases is only suffering ceasing.[26] His knowledge about this is independent of others.[27]

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[20] "Mostly," *yebhuyyena,* here refers to the ordinary being, except for the noble saints (*ariya,puggala*) who hold on to the extreme notions of either something exists (*atthitā*) (eternalism, *sassata*) or does not exist (*natthitā*) (annihilationism, *uccheda*) (SA 2:32). See foll n.

[21] Here, following Bodhi, I have rendered *atthitā* as "the notion of existence" and *n'atthitā* as "the notion of non-existence." See SD 6.13 (2).

[22] On the tr of the terms *samudaya* and *nirodha* see Intro (3).

[23] The 2 sentences of this verse are the two extremes rejected by the Buddha in **Lokāyatika S** (S 12.48/2:77), including 2 more: that all is unity and that all is plurality. Comy: In terms of dependent arising, "the origin of the world" is the direct conditionality (*anuloma paccay'ākāra*), "the ending of the world" is the reverse conditionality" (*paṭiloma paccayākāra*). Here the world refers to formations (*saṅkhāra*). In reflecting on the direct-order dependent arising, (seeing the rise of phenomena) one does not fall into the notion of annihilationism; reflecting on the reverse dependent origination, (seeing the ending of phenomena) one does not fall into the notion of eternalism. (SA 2:33). The Buddha's teaching on the origin and ending of the world (in terms of the five aggregates) is found in **Loka S** (S 12.44/2:73 f).

[24] "bound…adherence," PTS *upāy'upādānâbhinivesa,vinibandha,* but preferred reading is Be Ce *upāy'upādānâbhinivesa,vinibaddha = upāya* (attachment, fixation) + *upādāna* (clinging) + *abhinivesa* (inclination, mindset, adherence) + *vinibaddha* (bound, shackled) [alt reading *vinibandha,* bondage]. Comy: Each of the three—fixation, clinging, inclination [mindset]—arise by way of craving (*taṇhā*) and views (*diṭṭhi),* for it is through these that one fixates to, clings to, inclines to the phenomena of the three spheres as "I" and "mine." (SA 2:33). These three words appear to be syns or near-syns of latent tendencies, but I have rendered them in order of their subtlety (fixation, clinging, inclination [mindset]). See S:B 736 n31.

[25] "But this…'My self'," *tañ câyaṁ upāy'upādānaṁ cetaso **adhiṭṭhānaṁ abhinivesânusayaṁ** na upeti na upādiyati nâdhiṭṭhati "attā me" ti.* Comy: Craving and views are called "mental standpoint" (*cetaso adhiṭṭhana*) because they are the foundation for the (unwholesome) mind, and "the latent tendency of inclination [mindset]," or perhaps "inclination [mindset] and latent tendency" (*abhinivesânusaya*) because they stay to the mind and lie latent there (SA 2:33). This is a difficult sentence, and I am guided by the Sutta spirit than the letter. See S:B 736 n32. Cf **Hāliddakāni S 1** (S 22.3.9/3:10), SD 10.12.

[26] Comy: Suffering (*dukkha*) here refers to the 5 aggregates of clinging. What the noble disciple sees, when he reflects on his own existence, is not a self or a substantially existent person but only the arising and passing away of causal conditions (*paccay'uppanna,nirodha*) (of dependent arising). (SA 2:33). Cf **Selā**'s verses (S 548-551/1:134) & **Vajirā**'s verses (S 553-55/1:135).

[27] "Independent of others," *apara-p,paccayā.* From stream-entry on, the noble disciple sees the truth of the Dharma by himself, and as such is not dependent on anyone else, not even the Buddha, for his insight into the Dharma.

It is in this way, Kaccāna, that there is right view.

7   'Everything is [all exists] (*sabbam atthi*),'[28] Kaccāna, this is one extreme. 'Everything is not [all does not exist] (*sabbaṁ n'atthi*),' this is the second extreme.

<div align="right">(S 12.15.4-7/2:16 f) = SD 6.13</div>

4.4.2.3 The world turns on <u>dualism</u>, especially that of *good versus evil*. This dualism is attractive because it is an easy way of looking at the world. The believers of a religion tend to regard their own religion as "good" (or the best) and to demonize other religions and outsiders. "The others" are not only ignorant and evil, but they have fallen short of God's glory: they are *radically* evil, rotten to the core.

4.4.2.4 US sociologist, **Robert N Bellah,** asks,

> How can we understand this peculiarly American approach to empire? Part of the answer lies in understanding our dissenting Protestant tradition. The dissenting Protestants who founded America were suspicious of government. They thought people should do things for themselves through voluntary societies. They were also deeply moralistic. Opposed to the established church-es, which happily included saints and sinners, they regarded their own churches as churches of the saved. They tended to see society and the world as split between the righteous and the un-righteous. In that tradition, the desire to triumph over evil can trump the aversion to power. If evil is loose in the world, it is up to us to put a stop to it.   (Bellah 2003)

4.4.3 After the bombing of the World Trade Center in New York by Muslim terrorists, troubling fundamental questions about religion arise again among thinkers. Is religion more of a bane to mankind than a boon? What Bellah has noted in his own religion, Christianity, **Pervez Amirali Hoodbhoy,**[29] in a 2001 article, entitled "How Islam Lost Its Way," published in the Washington Post, openly remarks of his own religion:[30]

> …Islam—like Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism or any other religion—is not about peace. Nor is it about war. Every religion is about absolute belief in its own superiority and the divine right to impose itself upon others.   (Washington Post, 30 Dec 2001:B04)

On 13th September 2001, the same day that US President George W Bush (a fundamentalist Christian) announced that he planned to "rid the world of evil," the Washington Post quoted Joshua Teitelbaum, a research fellow at Tel Aviv University who had studied the Al-Qaeda (the predominant early 21st century global Muslim terrorist movement), thus: "He looks at the world in very stark, black-and-white terms. For him, the US represents the forces of evil that are bringing corruption and domination into the Islamic world, and particularly to Saudi Arabia, the holiest land in the world for Muslims." (13 Sep 2001: A28). International studies scholar and Buddhist philosopher **David Loy** asks:

> What is the difference between bin Laden's view and Bush's? They are opposites, of course —in fact, *mirror* opposites. Let's look at that quote again, changing only a few names: "George W Bush looks at the world in very stark, black-and-white terms. For him, the al-Qaeda represents the forces of evil that are bringing corruption and domination into the Western world." You're either with us or against us.[31]

However, he may still approach the Buddha or an enlightened teacher for instructions and guidance in meditation until he attains liberation.

[28] On these two "notions," see SD 6.13 (2).

[29] Pervez Amir Ali Hoodbhoy is prof of physics at Quaid-e-Azam University, Islamabad.

[30] Repr in Sunday Times, 6 Jan 2002.

[31] Bush, not long after 9/11, actually said, "You're either with us or you're with the terrorists." Ironically, the act-ual Bible quotation is: "And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not: <u>for he that is not against us is for us</u>." (Luke 9:50; emphasis added). Renowned US sociologist of religion, **Robert Bellah** wisely notes: "It is not helpful, though it might he understandable, for our president to say not long after 9/11, 'You're either with us or you're with the ter-rorists.' The world is too complex and its diversity too great to be split into two camps on any issue. We must expect

What bin Laden sees as good—an Islamic *jihad* against an impious imperialism—Bush sees as evil. What Bush sees as good—America the defender of freedom and democracy—bin Laden sees as evil. That makes them two different versions of the same holy-war-between-good-and-evil.   (Loy 2003:124)

4.5 THE TRUE STRENGTH OF A RELIGION

4.5.1 The danger of such simplistic dichotomous good-versus-evil way of dealing with conflict is that it tends to keep us from looking deeper and from trying to discover true causes. Once something has been identified or pronounced as evil, there is no more need to explain it, but to focus on fighting or destroying it. This appears to be a common tendency amongst the Abrahamic religions everywhere.[32] Again, David Loy reflects:

This is where we can benefit from the different perspective of a non-Abrahamic religious tradition.

For Buddhism, evil, like everything else, has no essence or substance of its own; it is a product of impermanent causes and conditions. Buddhism emphasizes the *concept* of evil less than what it calls the *three roots of evil,* or the three causes of evil, also known as the three poisons: greed, ill will and delusion. Let me offer what may be a controversial distinction: the Abrahamic religions emphasize the struggle between good and evil because the basic issue is usually understood to be our will: which side are we on? In contrast, Buddhism emphasizes ignorance and enlightenment because the basic issue depends on our self-knowledge: do we really understand what motivates us?   (Loy 2003:125)

4.5.2 It is interesting to see how the three roots of evil are so pervasive in our human society. Our economic systems are rooted in greed, euphemized as "demand." If we are more honest with ourselves, we surely would ask, proposes Loy,

More precisely, how much of US foreign policy in the Middle East has been motivated by our love of freedom and democracy, and how much by our need—our greed—for its oil? (How did "our" oil get into "their" wells?) If the main priority has been securing oil supplies, and if we have sacrificed other, more democratic concerns for access to that oil, does it mean that our petroleum-based economy is one of the causes of the September [2001] attacks [on the World Trade Center, NY & the Pentagon]?

Buddhist teachings imply that we should focus especially on the role of delusion in creating this situation. Delusion has a special meaning in Buddhism. The fundamental delusion is our sense of separation from the world we are "in," including our separation from other people. Insofar as we feel separate from others, we are more inclined to manipulate them to get what we want. This naturally breeds resentment: both from others, who do not like to be used, and within ourselves, when we do not get what we want… Isn't this also true collectively?

The delusion of separation becomes wisdom when we realize that "no one is an island." We are interdependent because we are all part of each other, different facets of the same jewel we call the earth. This world is a not a collection of objects but a community of subjects, a web of interacting processes.   (Loy 2003:126)

4.5.3 A religion's true strength

4.5.3.1 The true strength of a religion lies in its ability to remove differences and divisions amongst humans, indeed amongst all living beings. Originally perhaps, the God-idea arose to provide a strong

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that many who have no sympathy with terrorism nonetheless are not 'with us' in all that we propose to do. When we tell them what to do it would be wise, as Tony Blair recently suggested, to 'listen back,' even if we have to hear strong disagreements." (2003)

[32] This dualistic view is also found in Buddhist history, eg, the Buddhist justification for war against the Tamils has deep ancient roots in Sinhala Buddhism, going back to the Mahāvihāra itself: see eg Sujato 2006b:55-64.

cement for members of the community to rise above human and petty differences. Somehow down the ages, certain individuals or groups began to exploit the idea and began to create God in their own image: this is *politics*. Politics build walls so that the walled can be easily dominated. True religion breaks down walls so that we are liberated and see our true oneness.

4.5.3.2 Ironically, God-religions can never be true religion, in the sense of being ways of spiritual liberation [2]. Understandably, monotheism is the most intolerable form of religion because one is allowed to believe in only *the* one God; for, all else are false gods. Monotheistic religions have always worked closely with colonialism and power politics. During the colonial age (15th-20th centuries), the Christian nations of the West decided to divide their "God's world" into spheres of influence, goaded by "God, glory and gold." Indeed, to the colonial mind, God (that is, one's belief in God) legitimizes one to plunder and colonize other lands and even destroy other cultures. Even today this pathological notion of dominance still reeks in the minds of evangelists and God-centred relief aid groups.

4.5.3.3 For most God-believers, this world is merely a sort of preparation or testing-ground for God's heaven. However, the most pernicious characteristic of the God-idea is that those who claim their God to be the one and only true God, easily find a very good excuse for segregating and evangelizing (that is, colonizing) them, or worse, for persecuting and executing them. Understandably, such an ideology in the hands of the politically powerful, or those who have huge funds, or the mentally unstable, can have widespread and devastating effects, as here morality is not defined as the common good, but as submission to God's will, so that whatever happens is regarded as God's will.[33]

4.5.4 Religious terrorism, as seen during the early 21st century, is based on the notion that since God is the creator, one is only answerable to one's God, and not morally accountable to anyone else. Even one's life is not one's own, but God's. As such, there is neither respect for life, especially those outside the faith, and no fear of death, since one would be rewarded by God if one serves God.

> What does this mean for the duality of good versus evil? Perhaps the most important way the interdependence of good and evil shows itself is that we don't know what is good until we know what is evil, and we don't feel we are good unless we are fighting against that evil. We can feel comfortable and secure in our own goodness only by attacking and destroying the evil outside us. St George needs that dragon in order to be St George. His heroic identity requires it. And, sad to say but true, that this is why we like wars: they cut through the petty problems of daily life, and unite us good guys here against the bad guys over there. There is fear in that, of course, but it is also exhilarating. The meaning of life becomes clearer. The problems with my life, and yours, are now over there.   (Loy 2003:128)

4.5.5 The greatest problem with seeing good and evil as separate realities is the failure to see them as aspects of our own minds. We create our own good and bad in the sense that we are ultimately accountable for what we think, say and do. The real war is within ourselves, that is, the war against greed, hate and delusion. *Greed* seeks what we think we lack; *hate* pushes away what we see as different; and *delusion* is the blindness to the true nature of these two evil roots. Greed creates false friends; hate creates false enemies; and delusion makes strangers of us. These roots are deep and have to be carefully dug out and removed. At least, they should not be fed or fuelled.

Following the 11 September 2001 bombing of the World Trade Center, NY, this story of unknown origin, circulated the Internet:

> A native American grandfather was talking to his grandson about how he felt.
> He said, "I feel as if I have two wolves fighting in my heart. One wolf is vengeful, angry and violent. The other wolf is loving and compassionate."
> The grandson asked: "Which wolf will win the fight in your heart, grandfather?"
> The grandfather answered simply: "The one that I feed."

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[33] For related wrong views of the creator God-idea, see **Deva,daha S** (M 101/2:214-228), SD 18.4 (4).

4.6 NOT-SELF AND KARMA

4.6.1   While Buddhism acknowledges that the world has its own sliding scales of good and evil, <u>there are certain universal values</u>—such as *life*, *happiness*, *freedom*, *truth* and *wisdom*—that all rightly thinking beings would treasure. Unlike social ethics, which are worldly ways of measuring others, Buddhism teaches **karma,** a natural moral law. God may be moved by prayer and offerings, but karma, like gravity, works by itself, affecting all sentient beings, human, subhuman or divine, alike.

When a karmic act is done (through body, speech or mind), it is followed by a result (*vipāka*) or potential effect (*phala*) within the same stream or network. This is conditionality, that is, a network of causes and effects. It does not depend on a doer or recipient, or any external agency, for its efficacy. Karma is the flow of causes and effects, a stream of event currents, that is part of a network to which all living beings are somehow connected.

4.6.2   Karma, according to the Buddha's teachings, can be understood in terms of the middle way. To say that there is *someone* who creates karma and experiences its results is to fall into the error of <u>the eternalist view</u> (*sassata,diṭṭhi*). Similarly, one cannot say that it is *one* person who does the karma, but *another* who experiences the fruit. In either case, one holds the notion that there are everlasting entities or fixed forms.

To say that there is *no one* who creates the karma or experiences its results is to hold <u>the annihilationist view</u> (*uccheda,diṭṭhi*). This is a common view of the materialists who often believe that this is our only life, and there is nothing beyond it. Like in the creator-God idea (but for different reasons), the annihilationist is likely to think that he is not morally accountable for his actions. All laws and ethical standards are, in their view, man-made, and as such, they often quip, "Do what you like, so long as you don't get caught." This mindset encourages self-centredness and selfishness.

4.6.3   The Buddha declares the middle way, not out of philosophical necessity, but that through his *direct knowledge* or awakening, he sees no such dichotomy in true reality. In **the Poṭṭhapāda Sutta** (D 9), for example, the Buddha alludes to how our language and linguistic habits often support the wrong view of an unchanging entity or enduring self:

> For, Citta, these are merely common names, common expressions, common usages, common designations, in the world that the Tathagata [Thus Come] uses without attachment to them.
>
> (D 9.53/1:202) = SD 7.14

In the English language, for example, the use of the anticipative "it" reflects the dichotomous undercurrents. **Karunadasa** notes how when we say, for example, "it rains" or "it thunders,"

> we dichotomize a single process by the use of the word "it." In the same way, when we say, "I think," we tend to believe that there is an I-entity in addition to the process of thinking.
>
> (Karunadasa 1991:15)

However, as long as we use such language forms without being caught up with what is not really there, they can become useful means of transmitting the Dharma. For this reason, the Buddha admonishes us to use language and forms that are clear and communicative, that the audience can relate to, so that the Dharma is understood by them for their benefit. Thus, at the close of **the Araṇa Vibhaṅga Sutta** (M 139), the Buddha declares

> Here, monks, clinging to a **regional language** and rejecting common usage are a state of suffering, trouble, despair, frenzy: *it* is the wrong way. As such, this is <u>a state of conflict</u>.
> Here, monks, not clinging to a regional language and not rejecting **common usage** is a state without suffering, without trouble, without despair, without frenzy: *it* is the right way. As such, this is <u>a state of non-conflict</u>.   (M 139.13/3:236) = SD 7.8

4.7 SELF-EMPTYING

4.7.1   We are troubled not because of a soul or self, but we are troubled by the *notion* that there is a soul or a self when there is really none. The only way of overcoming this existential angst is to empty

ourselves of such views.[34] The thought of letting go of a false security (of an abiding entity, etc) can be very difficult when one is unable to see any other viable alternative, or worse when there is *no* alternative available, such as when there is no Buddha around or where the True Dharma has been forgotten.

4.7.2   The first step in **self-emptying** is the proper understanding and proactive observance of the five precepts, whose basic purpose is <u>to empty ourselves of unwholesome reactions of the body and of speech</u>. Even as we persevere to keep the five precepts, this perseverance itself becomes the basis for mental cultivation, which is <u>the emptying the mind of unwholesome states</u> by directing it towards sama-dhi or one-pointedness. When the mind is calm and clear, <u>it empties itself of long-accumulated latent tendencies</u> so that in due course lust, ill will and ignorance are overcome so that one attains spiritual liberation.

Some people think that there is "much" to lose when one takes up the challenge of keeping the precepts or mental cultivation. *The "muchness" of course depends on how much attachment one has to let go off*. The difference between the bound and the liberated is a subtle one: the bound thinks that there is much to be abandoned, but *the liberated* knows that there is nothing really to be abandoned. "Nothing" here means that there is really nothing in this world is that is ours. We may change ourselves or the world, but we can never take anything (except our karma) with us when life ends. This is sometimes called <u>the wisdom of insecurity</u>.

4.7.3   The best expression of the wisdom of insecurity is found in **spiritual renunciation**, the ideal form of which the monastic life of training in moral virtue, mental cultivation and wisdom. Even on an ethical level, monastic renunciation has great social significance: in Buddhist monasticism, one renounces one's family for the spiritual community.

Another way of putting this is that the renunciant leaves the biological family to join *the global family*. This means that, far from giving up one's parents, siblings, children and relatives, one actually adopts all beings as one parents, siblings, children and relatives. In fact, this same attitude underlies a true Buddhist community, that is, the spirit of the spiritual community. Such a community is very conducive to spiritual development.

4.7.4   The spiritual community has only one spiritual purpose: to remind us of **the ease and urgency of working for our liberation**. Although some of us may think that arhathood is a difficult goal, even for monastics in post-Buddha times, the Suttas (such as **the Okkanti Saṁyutta,[35]** chapter 25 of the Saṁyutta Nikāya) tells us how easy it is to work towards streamwinning, which is the very first step, that is, embarking on the boat on the stream to awakening, that is, spiritual liberation <u>in this life itself</u>:

(1)   Make a solemn self-declaration that we wish to gain stream-winning in this life itself. We only to do this *once:* if we are single-minded, this has a very empowering effect.
(2)   Choose one of the ten suttas in the Okkanti Saṁyutta (S 25) that we can relate to for constant reflection. This text can be reflectively read as part of a puja, or recorded and often listened to.
(3)   Constantly maintain the perception of impermanence (*anicca,saññā*) in daily life.
(4)   Associate with spiritual friends who have made the same aspiration.

4.7.5   Whether we are faith-inclined or wisdom-inclined, *we will attain stream-winning in this life itself*, if not at the moment of dying (so says all the ten suttas of the Okkanti Saṁyutta). Anyway, the alternatives are not very pleasant: rebirth in subhuman states, painful sufferings, and experiencing recurring samsara.

Pathavyā eka,rajjena	Better than sole sovereignty on the earth,
saggassa gamanena vā	or going to heaven,
sabba,lokâdhipaccena	or lordship over the whole world,
sotāpatti,phalaṁ varaṁ	is the attainment of the fruit of stream-winning.

(Dh 178)

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[34] On spiritual emptying and kenosis, see David Loy 2003:133.
[35] "The collected sayings on the descent (into a boat on the stream)."

5 Dichotomies and distinction

5.1 DIFFICULTY IN DISTINCTION

5.1.1 Although Southwold makes a distinction between what he calls Meditation Buddhism and Ministry Buddhism [3.2], he is careful to admit:

> I assume that this [terminology] correlates strongly (<u>but not perfectly</u>) with the distinction be-
> tween Buddhism as it appears to those who study scriptures, and Buddhism as it is found by those
> who study people….   (Southwold 1983:134; emphases added)

Dichotomies are contextual, and as such are not truly universal. However, when one sees both sides of the dichotomy—the views of the scriptural scholar (the Indologist, etc) and of the ethnograper (or any other specialist view), or the text and the context—one gets a broader and clearer perspective of the situation.

5.1.2 <u>Categories</u> are often academic constructions: the reality is that everything is interconnected and mutually conditioning. As **Keown** insightfully observes, scholars like Winston King (1964) and Melford Spiro (1970), in their studies of Burmese Buddhism, misinterpreting their field data or skewing them to fit their own theories and categories, thus

> allege there are two forms of Buddhism (both confine their remarks to Theravāda Buddhism), and
> that these two forms of Buddhism are regulated separately through disjunctive values of nirvana
> and karma. They argue, moreover, that these two values are pursued by distinct sociological
> groups, namely laity and monks. Thus while a layman seeks to generate merit (*puñña*) through
> generosity (*dāna*) and morality (*sīla*) in the hope of a good rebirth, a monk seeks to eradicate all
> karma through mental culture (*bhāvanā*), in the hope of putting an end to rebirth by gaining
> nirvana. These two forms of Buddhism are termed respectively (a) "Kammatic Buddhism"
> (Spiro) or "the ethic of *kamma*" (King); and (b) "Nibbanic Buddhism" (Spiro) or "the ethic of
> *nibbāna*' or 'the ethic of equanimity' (King).   (Keown 1992:84) [5]

Form of Buddhism	goal	pursued by	means	technique
1 "Nibbanic"	nirvana	monks	destroy karma	*bhāvanā*
2 "Kammatic"	good rebirth	laity	create karma	*dāna,sīla*

Fig 5.1 Basic Buddhist polarities (King/Spiro). (After Damien Keown 1992:84)

Such categories and "radical discontinuity"[36] [1.1] betray both a misinterpretation of field data and the inadequacy of oversimplified schemata. Scholars of Buddhism generally regard the King-Spiro hypothesis as outdated.[37] The socio-religious realities of Buddhist communities are more complicated. In Burma (modern Myanmar), for example, although many monastics are famous for their knowledge of Abhidhamma and practice of meditation, there are similarly many lay Buddhists renowned for their meditation and Abhidhamma abilities, and also monks who are regular football fans or own kuxury cars. While almost everyone knows the difficulty of attaining nirvana in this life, each individual would choose his own aspiration towards stream-winning, not according to the categories of King or Spiro, but as *a personal inclination*.

5.1.3 Fortunately, most modern scholars, before and after King and Spiro, do not share their misperceptions of contemporary Buddhists. For example, **Richard Gombrich,** in *Precept and Practice,* his study of Sinhalese Buddhism notes that the religious aspirations of both monks and laymen in Sri Lanka coincide rather than diverge: "Most people, monks included, devote themselves exclusively to acts of

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[36] Keown's term: see 1992:85.
[37] For a critique of King and Spiro, see Keown 1996:83-92

merit (*pinkam*),[38] the aim of which is good rebirth in heaven or on earth" (1971:322). **Jane Bunnag,** in her study, *Buddhist Monk, Buddhist Layman* (1973)*,* similarly <u>notices the complementarity of both lay and monastic goals</u>:

> In practice…none of the Thai monks to whom I spoke appeared to consider Nirvana a relevant goal for which to strive; those who considered that salvation was attainable in modern times, believed that only after billions of years of tireless effort could they or their contemporaries achieve this status… Thus both the Buddhist bhikkhu and the Buddhist householder pursue the same end, though by different means; each "seeks the secondary compensation of a prosperous rebirth"…by doing good and avoiding evil.   (1979:19 f)

5.1.4 Michael Carrithers, in his study of *The Forest Monks of Sri Lanka* (1983)*,* notes <u>the centrality of moral virtue (*sīla*)</u> in the lives of Sinhala forest monks.[39] Anthropologist **SJ Tambiah**, in his study of charisma in Buddhism, entitled *The Buddhist Saints of the Forest and the Cult of Amulets* (1984) similarly notes a close relationship between Buddhist monks and laity:

> In a sense, then, when increasing numbers of laymen observe the eight or ten precepts on *wan-phra,* and congregate at *wat* for meditational sittings, the layman-monk distinction as portraying different regimes and styles of life is blurred.   (1984:168)

> …I asked him [a *lekhā* or scribe] why laymen studied and practised meditation, and he said they wished to attain *nibbāna*; it was not necessary to don the monk's robe to seek this goal.
> (1984:179)

5.1.5 Although the average lay Buddhist may not have an in-depth knowledge of "scriptures," that is, the various doctrines and stories as found in the ancient Buddhist canon, they are becoming more easily accessible today by way of books, digital texts and the Internet. In fact, there are today probably more layperson scholars of Buddhism than monastic scholars. Even in the past, before books and the Internet were available, there was a constant dialogue between the monastics and the laity so that the latter is constantly reminded of the canonical tenets of Buddhism.[40]

5.2 ROLE REVERSALS

5.2.1 Certain realities of Buddhism today are worth noting, as they clearly show that how ethnographical, anthropological or sociological analyses of it can never be satisfactory. Indeed, there is a new dimension of Buddhism that is now contributing to a more in-depth study of its realities, that is, **a psychology of Buddhism**. This approach is made feasible and interesting with <u>the availability and use of modern science (such as mind science) and technology (such as measurements of brain activity during meditation)</u>,[41] and <u>the "first-person" experience of Buddhism</u> (that is, scholars who are also practising Buddhists).[42]

5.2.2 From the field studies and works of such archaeologists aS John Marshall[43] and scholars like Gregory Schopen,[44] for example, we know that monks <u>often owned considerable amounts of property,</u>

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[38] Or *pinkama,* Sinhala for Pali, *puñña,kamma.*

[39] See 1983:19-22, 43, 48-58.

[40] For a study of the monastic-lay tension, see IF Silber, "Dissent through holiness: The case of the radical renouncer in Theravada Buddhist countries" 1984; see **Memes**, SD 26.3 & biblio.

[41] See **Consciousness and meditation**, SD 17.8c, esp §§3, 4, 7.4.

[42] See esp Roger Jackson & John Makransky (eds), *Buddhist Theology: Critical reflections by contemporary Buddhist scholars*. Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 2000. pbk 410 pages.

[43] John Marshall, *Taxila: An illustrated account of archaeological excavations carried out at Taxila under the orders of the government of India between the years 1913-1934*, vol 1, Cambridge, 1951:204. See also RBDR Sahni, *Archaeological Remains and Excavations at Bairat*, Jaipur, 1937:21 f & DB Diskalkar, "Excavations at Kasrawad," *Indian Historical Quarterly* 25, 1949:21 ff.

had money at their disposal, and even minted their own money.[45] With such evidence, we can surmise that during the period after the Buddha's passing up to the Turk Muslim invasions of India and the disappearance of Buddhism from the subcontinent, there was a growing laicization of the Buddhist monastics in India. This is clearly one of the reasons, and a very important one, too, for the decline of Buddhism in India.[46]

5.2.2 LAICIZATION

5.2.2.1 Today, we see an ongoing laicization of the Buddhist monastics on two important levels, namely, academic and financial. Where the early saints inspired others by their calm presence and spiritual attainment, monastics today more readily command the respect of others with secular academic titles and financial security. Although the Mahāvihāra monastery of Sri Lanka was founded by Devanampiya Tissa (247-207 BCE), a contemporary of Asoka's, in time it became better known for scholasticism and meditation theory than meditation practice and spiritual life.

5.2.2.2 It was the Mahāvihāra tradition, as recorded by Commentators such as Buddhaghosa, that introduced a false bifurcation of the Buddhist training into "the burden of study" (*gantha,dhura*) and "the burden of insight meditation" (*vipassanā,dhura*).[47] This tradition pervades Sinhala Buddhism to this day, so that the better monks are mostly scholars, and the lesser ones inclined towards politics, financial matters and other wordly affairs.[48] Sinhala forest monks,[49] unlike those of Myanmar and Thailand, are a rarity and their teachings very rarely left Sri Lanka.

5.2.2.3 **Jonathan Watts** summarizes this pernicious situation, as found in a sector of contemporary Sinhala Buddhism thus:

> In this way [when the monks move to the community's centre of power], the myth of the *devarāja* and the myth of monastic poverty and other-worldliness served to collapse the differentiations between church, state and market that the Buddha had envisioned. In terms of the organization of the lay and monastic sangha, the domination of the scholar monks (*gantha dhura*) led to the mythification of various aspects of the *samaṇa* way which appear central to the Buddha's teaching, such as the monastic's voluntary poverty and differentiation from society as well as the realization of nirvana itself.
>
> With nirvana mythologized in the great attainments of the Buddha and his direct disciples, the practice of the average monk became less on realization of this increasingly unattainable goal and more on the ritualized practice of the monastic Vinaya and the rote memorization of the suttas (Ray 1994). For the lay person, the goal of enlightenment became so distant that further samsara

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[44] *Bones, Stones, and Buddhist Monks: Collected essays on the archaeology, epigraphy and texts of monasticism in India,* Studies in Buddhist Tradition series. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997:3-5.

[45] Marshall, commenting on one of the numerous hoards of coins found at the monastic site surrounding the Dharmarājikā stupa at Taxila, said: "Probably the hollow block of kañjūr [scripture] was merely a secret hiding place where one of the monks hid his store of coins…the possession of money by a monk *was contrary, of course, to the rule of the Church,* but the many small hoards that have been found in monasteries of the early mediaeval period leave little room for doubt that by that time the rules had become more or less a dead letter" (1937:21 f). Schopen adds that "Such hoards, in fact, found in Buddhist monasteries that are very much earlier than 'the early mediaeval period'" (1997:17 n19). On the occurrences of **money-minting in monasteries** at Kasrawad, see Diskalkar, *IHQ* 25, 1949: 15; at Nālandā, B Kumar, *Archaeology of Pataliputra and Nalanda,* Delhi, 1987:212; SSP Sarasvati, *Coinage in Ancient India: A numismatic, archaeochemical and metallurgical study of ancient Indian coins,* vol 1, Delhi, 1986: 202 f; and Schopen 1997:5. See **Money and monastics**, SD 4 esp §9.

[46] For other reasons, see Piya Tan, **History of Buddhism,** ch 1: Buddhism in India, 2005 §§29-31.

[47] AA 1:312, 2:40, 5:68; DhA 1:7 f, 6, 154, 2:240, 4:37 f; SnA 1:306; ThaA 2:101, 141, 3:117; J 5:117; ApA 237, 275. It is interesting to note that this digital search of the CSCD does not show any refs from the Canon itself, nor in DA, MA and SA (but only in their subcomys), which probably shows that the bifurcation was not yet widespread in Buddhaghosa's time.

[48] See eg SJ Tambiah, *Buddhism Betrayed?,* 1984 & HL Seneviratne, *The Work of Kings: The New Buddhism in Sri Lanka.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999. 358pp.

[49] See Michael Carrithers, *The Forest Monks of Sri Lanka.* Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983.

in the form of more favorable rebirths became the central goal, which was achieved through the ritualized merit making of fetishized generosity (*dana*) in providing for the monastic's requisites.

The result, not surprisingly, has been that the Buddha's notion of karma as intentional (*cetanā*) ethical action morphed back into a Brahmanistic one of ritual action by which to gain heaven and avoid hell. This organizational development fed into the larger socio-political one in which the monarch, instead of being "the People's Choice" (*Mahā-Sammata*) as in the *Aggañña Sutta* or an ethical ruler (*dhammarāja*) as in the *Cakkavatti Sutta*, became a divine ruler (*deva-rāja*) who was "a repository of merit linking the kingdom to the cosmos and possessing, both in his person and in his office, a relationship to the invisible world by which his body and his actions were made sacred" (Steinberg 1987:60). The transference of the mythical qualities of an enlightened bhikkhu onto the monarch helped to create various state-sanctifying rituals conflating the state, the religion and the people.

As we have seen, ethics (*sīla*) supports the conditions for responsible communication and the sharing of power. This in turn fosters a culture where church, state and market are properly differentiated and integrated. When Buddhists are able to establish their communities in such a way, Buddhism is able to act as a civilization force which favors no single race, country, or class and provides a common basis for the uniting of diverse peoples across regions.

However, when ethics and communication become ritualized, power stagnates and loses its void (*suññatā*) and interdependent qualities. In this way, the organizational culture shifts to a dualistic mode in which integration becomes domination and differentiation becomes alienation. That is, those who exist within the community or sphere of power must obey the centralized source of power; those who do not will be alienated or shunned; and those who originally exist without will either become objects for domination and total alienation (death).

When Buddhists establish communities in such a way, Buddhism becomes a chauvinistic cultural force which differs in no way from similar forms of Christianity and Islam from which it prides itself on being so different. …   (Watts 2004:7; reparagraphed)

5.2.2.4 At least, the skeletons are now out of the closets and not buried away under some Buddha image, but safely invested in impressive buildings, large bank accounts, and respectable money-motivated overseas missions.[50] Monastics who are true practitioners or teach meditation are rare today: many of them directly or indirectly run some sort of business enterprise, such as social work (which is an effective way of legitimizing their views and activities), or set up a self-propelled overseas mission to rein in a few wealthy supporters or run some lucrative activity. Often, when questioned as to why monastics need money, the answer is often to the effect, "How do we support ourselves otherwise?"[51]

5.2.2.5 On the other hand, we see an increasing number of lay Buddhists committing themselves more to Buddhist work (even full-time ministry) and to meditation, and many of them are accomplished and popular teachers of doctrine and meditation. This role reversal apparently is intensifying as the monastics turn more to worldly success and the laity to the spiritual life. We have what may be called *the laicization of the monastics*, and *the monasticization of the laity*.[52]

5.2.2.6 The Buddhist laity, as such, is often enough like a large extended family of neglected children whose parents are busy making money and lost in worldly affairs, but the children, left to their own devices, are happily turning from indigo into blue, but is bluer than indigo.[53] This is a sort of internal spiritual

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[50] See eg HL Seneviratne, *The Work of Kings.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991.

[51] This common response from moneyed monks clearly attests to the laicization of monastics today. On the other hand, for a study of the successful advent and work of the traditional forest Sangha in the UK (and outside of Thailand), see eg Sandra Bell, "Being creative with tradition: Rooting Theravāda Buddhism in Britain." *Journal of Global Buddhism* 1 2000:1-23. http://jgb.la.psu.edu.

[52] See eg DK Swearer 1995:107-161 (ch 3).

[53] From a saying of the Chinese Confucianist philosopher, Xunzi or Hsün-tzu (荀子; b Zhao c310-237 BCE): "Blue comes from indigo, yet is bluer than indigo" (青出於藍, 而勝於藍), ie, the blue that comes from the indigo is bluer than the plant itself, meaning, the pupil surpasses the master. In more serious situations, it is apt to describe

safety device by way of which the Dharma protects itself. Surely some good would come out of this as the unrelenting faith and effort of the laity begin to highlight the hollowness of those monastics who need to be reminded of their sworn vows and duties as our spiritual parents and spiritual siblings.

6 *Kusala:* good or skillful?

6.1 WHAT IS GOOD?

6.1.1 Karma is often discussed today in terms of good and evil, but as we shall see this is only one aspect of karma, usually a cultural or social one. Such discussions are always problematic because different cultures, different religions, different systems (such as the legal system), indeed different individuals at different times (for example, in times of peace and of war), have different perceptions of what is good and what is evil.

In English, the words "good" and "evil" have notoriously broad meanings and various connotations, especially the word "good," which is much more widely used than "evil." Often, a morally virtuous person is said to be "good"; simple food is "good" to the hungry; a block of stone of a certain shape may be "good" to a sculptor. Moreover, what one regards as good may not be so to many others. Even the same action or object viewed from one angle, may be regarded as good, but not from another. Certain behaviors are considered good manners in some areas or levels of society, but "bad" (strange or even rude) elsewhere.

The definition of "good" is even more subjective in the fine arts: poetry, painting, music, and the performing arts. Critics of the fine arts do not always agree on what is "good" when judging the works of others in these fields. So there is "good" in the hedonistic sense, in the artistic sense, in the economic sense, in the religious sense. It all depends on one's values and state of mind. All these are regarded as mundane conceptions of the good.

6.1.2 In summary, we can divide "good" as used in English into four categories of approval:
- social approval, that is, a general consensus, such as the preferred candidate in a general election;
- aesthetic approval, in the artistic sense (of art, music, poetry, and the other fine arts);
- technical approval, in the economic, and religious senses; and
- moral approval, that is, that which contributes to the greater good, or allows for a harmonious society.

Often these meanings overlap. For example, a building project may receive social approval (it is built within the budget, in time and located in an ideal spot), aesthetic approval (it beautifully blends with the environment), technical approval (functional, has energy-saving features, and facilities for the disabled), and moral approval (is a place for rehabilitating wayward youths and for youth training).

6.1.3 Buddhism is mainly concerned with good in the sense of *moral approval,* that is, its ethical sense. In practical terms, this ethical good consists of being properly restrained in body and speech, that is, in keeping with the 5 precepts—restraint from destroying life, from taking the not-given, from sexual misconduct, from falsehood, and from addictive habits (especially drinking). This ethical good is not an end in themselves, but serves as a conducive support for personal spiritual development.

6.1.4 In the Buddhist analysis of karma, the ethical nature of good and evil becomes very clear, especially when we discuss the terms *kusala* and *akusala* [6.2]*,* and *puñña* and *pāpa* [6.3]. They are no more subjective and capricious in the way the world sees good and evil, but are decisive qualities we have to deal with in our quest for awakening and spiritual liberation.

6.2 *KUSALA*

6.2.1 GOOD OR SKILLFUL?

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certain current Buddhist situations as a dysfunctional family with divorced parents, each living in the prosperity, pleasures and pretences of high society, and neglecting their children who are left to their own devices. On an even darker level, such trends often encourage anarchic situations in Buddhist groups and activities, reminiscent of scenes from William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* (1954): see eg http://www.gerenser.com/lotf/. For a deeper study, see **Memes**, SD 26.3.

6.2.1.1 **L S Cousins,** in his paper "Good of skillful? *Kusala* in Canon and Commentary" (1996), examines the use of *kusala* in the commentarial sources and finds that, although the commentators are aware of various senses of the word *kusala*, they tend to give primacy to meanings such as "good" or "meritorious." A detailed examination of the canonical Pali sources gives a rather different picture.

Although **kusala** is sometimes found in association with the idea of karma or related notions, it much more commonly applies to meditation, and refers to spiritual states produced by wisdom. The original meaning of *kusala* in the early suttas, according to Cousins, would generally be "intelligent," and, more specifically or technically, means "produced by wisdom."

6.2.1.2   Cousins sees the semantic evolution of *kuśala*, thus:

1. An original meaning of "intelligent" or "wise";
2. Expert in magical and sacrificial ritual (in the *Brāhmaṇas*); for brahmins, of course, this would precisely constitute wisdom.
   - Skilled in meditational/mystical(/ascetic?) practices (in the early Pali sources and, no doubt, in other contemporary traditions), including skilled in the kind of behaviour which supports meditation, etc, ie *sīla*, etc.
   - Skilled in performing *dāna* and *yañña*, now interpreted in terms of Buddhist ethical concerns; and associated with keeping the precepts and so on.
3. *Kusala* in later Buddhist and Jain sources becomes generalized to refer to something like wholesome or good states.

So there is no reason to doubt that by a later period (ie in the commentaries and perhaps later canonical sources) *kusala* in non-technical contexts meant something which could be translated as "good."   (Cousins 1996:156)

6.2.2   Cousins had actually written his paper in response to **Damien Keown's** analysis of *kusala* (1992:116-122). While Cousins, as seen above, tries to give an overview of the various senses of *kusala* as found in the Canon and Commentaries, Keown focusses on its canonical usages, thus:

> Like the English word "good," the Pali *kusala* conveys approbation or commendation in both a moral and a non-moral or technical sense. We use the same word "good" in English when we speak of a "good deed" or "a good man," implying moral approval; and we use the same word to denote technical approval, for instance, when we speak of a "good dentist" or a "good plumber." *Kusala* enjoys the same elasticity of meaning as the word "good," in that it can denote either a moral goodness or technical excellence according to context.   (1992:119)

6.2.2 Kusala: technical vs moral

6.2.2.1   From his philosophical background, however, Keown is against translating *kusala* as "skillful," as is often done because "this translation carries with it a specific implication for the nature of Buddhist ethics, namely, that it is utilitarian," and also because "in the Nikāyas the occurrences of *kusala* in the technical sense of *kusala* in a technical context are massively outnumbered by those in the moral context" (1992: 119 f).

6.2.2.1   Cousins, however, disagrees with Keown here. The technical or non-moral sense of *kusala* mentioned by Keown, according to Cousins, occurs "more than thirty times in the Canon"[54] (1996:143). In many such passages, it occurs in reference to proficiency in some of art or craft, sometimes directly linked to a related point, for example:

- Sona's proficiency in getting the right sound from the vina string, in order to emphasize the necessity to control energy and balance the faculties (*indriya*) (Mv 5.1; A 6.55).[55] "In other words there

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[54] V 1:182 = A 3:375; V 1:182 f, 2:201, 5:64 = 158; D 2:183; M 1:178 ff, 395 f, 2:94 f; S 5:149-52; A 1:112 f, 1:112 f, 116 f, 2:185, 186; Sn 321; Dh 44 f; Tha 1:139; Pug 42; J 2:162, 298, 3:477, 4:469, 5:148, 157, 326, 490, 6:25, 77, 85, 87, 213, 260, 475.
[55] Mv 5.1.13-18/V 1:182 f; A 6.55/3:375 f.

is an underlying implication that meditation is an activity requiring a kind of skill." (Cousins 1996: 143)

- The simile of the skilled elephant tracker, to emphasize the qualities of wisdom which can recognize a Tathagata and to compare dhyana and direct knowledges to the footprints of an elephant (M 27).[56]
- Prince Abhaya's knowledge of chariotry is compared with the Buddha's penetration of the *dhamma,dhātu,* that is, his wisdom (M 58).[57]
- Prince Bodhi's skill in chariotry is compared with the Buddha'a ability to teach (M 85).[58]
- A skilled cook is like a monk who cultivates the four focuses of mindfulness in the right way (S 47.8).[59]
- The chariot-maker, skilled in the crookedness of wood, is compared to the Buddha as an arhat skilled in dealing with the crookedness of body, speech and mind (A 3.15).[60]

6.2.2.2 Cousins goes on to point out that "around twice as frequent as passages where *kusala* is used in the sense of proficient are places where it has such a meaning as expert, clever or wise."[61] As such, Cousins notes, there is really "no clear dividing line between the two, just as there is no clear fixed line to be drawn between mundane cleverness and various kinds of superior understanding, whether in terms of understanding Buddhist theory or that involved in developing insight"[62] (1996:143 f).

6.3 *PUÑÑA*

6.3.1 In the Suttas, *puñña* is often opposed with *pāpa* (evil, badness)[63] [3]. *Puñña,* however, is often translated as "merit," probably because of such canonical passages as this statement from **the Mā Puñña Bhāyī Sutta** (It 3.2):

> *Mā bhikkhave puññānaṁ bhāyiṭṭha, sukhass'etaṁ bhikkhave adhivacanaṁ itthassa kantassa piyassa manāpassa, yad idaṁ puññāni.*
> Fear not merit, bhikshus! It is, bhikshus, another name for happiness, which is pleasing, dearly loved, and delightful, that is to say, merit.   (It 3.2/14 f)

Similar admonitions are found in the Pāpa Vagga of **the Dhammapada,**

Abhittharetha kalyāne	Be quick in doing good;
pāpā cittaṁ nivāraye	hinder the mind from evil:
dandhaṁ hi karoto puññaṁ	for one who is slow in making merit,
pāpasmiṁ ramati mano	his mind delights in evil. (Dh 116)
Puññañ ce puriso kayirā	If a person makes merit [fortune-bringing action],
kayirāth'etaṁ punappunaṁ	he should do it again and again.
tamhi chandaṁ kayirātha	He should find pleasure in it:
sukho puññassa uccayo	happy is the growth of merit. (Dh 118)
Mâvamaññetha puññassa	Look not down on merit,

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[56] **Cūḷa Hatthi,padopama S** (M 27.9-11/1:178 f).

[57] **Abhaya Rāja,kumāra S** (M 58.10-11/1:395 f), SD 7.12.

[58] **Bodhi Rāja,kumāra S** (M 85.55-59/2:94 f).

[59] **Sūda S** (S 47.8/5:149-152), SD 28.15.

[60] **(Pacetana) Ratha,kāra S** (A 3.15/1:112 f), SD 17.7.

[61] V 5:130, 197, 216; D 2:136; M 1:226 f., 2:144, 3:5; S 1:35, 169; A 2:46, 138, 3:201, 431, 5:96, 98; Khp 8 = Sn 143; Sn 48, 591, 881, 1039, 1078; Nm 69, 71-72, 105, 325, 177, 450, 2:9, 127, 128; Tha 251; Pv 4, 44; B 62; J 3:-210, 348, 5:65, 6:356; Ap 1:26, 29, 43, 2:499, 518, 570; Vbh 310; Kvu 170 ff, 176 ff, 180 ff, 190 ff.

[62] Cousins' statement, made with academic acumen, here clearly does not apply, say, when comparing an Oxford professor to an accomplished forest meditation teacher, esp when they both lead very different lifestyles and spiritual goals. However, in most cases of secular Buddhism today, he would be right.

[63] S 1:66*, 97, 2:83; Sn 520, 790; Dh 29, 39, 267; U 85; Ap 488; Vv 58; Pv 19.

na maṁ taṁ āgamissati	thinking, "It will not come to me."
uda,bindu,nipātena	Like falling drops of water,
pūrati dhīro puññassa	the wise fills himself with merit,
thoka,thokaṁ pi ācinaṁ	little by little he is full. (Dh 122)

6.3.2 In Dh 116, we see *pāpa* (evil) mentioned alongside *puñña.* In fact, the rest of the stanzas in **the Pāpa Vagga** (as the title suggests) have to do with evil. It is clear here that *puñña* is not only the opposite of *pāpa,* but both hint of being *kusala* (wholesome actions) and *akusala* (unwholesome actions) respectively.

The Dhammapada is a miscellaneous collection of aphorisms, short and deeply meaningful sayings. The brevity is clearly meant to attract and instruct the lay follower. Indeed, it is advantageous that the word *puñña* is pre-Buddhist, and as such helps the masses familiar with the term to connect with it, except in due course, they will see the new and Buddhist contexts of the term.

6.3.3 Problem with merit

6.3.3.1 *Puñña,* as pointed out by **L S Cousins**, "originally refers to the fortune-bringing or auspicious quality of an action" (1996:153). Its Sanskrit form clearly is ***puṇya,*** which Monier Williams *Sanskrit-English Dictionary* defines as "auspicious, propitious, fair, pleasant, good, right, virtuous, meritorious, pure, holy, sacred" (which senses, it notes, are found in the Ṛgveda etc).[64]

6.3.3.2 Cousins, however, is unhappy with the translating of *puñña* as "merit" or "meritorious," at least for the earliest literature, as "[t]he notion of merit seems to imply the notions of 'deserving' or 'being entitled'" (1996:155). In the early texts, *puñña,* Cousins points out, simply means fortunate or happy, or more specifically, "fortune-bringing action."[65] However, after the Buddha, it actually takes on the connotation of "merit." I think the problem here is simply one of usage: it is a matter of defining or redefining our terms clearly. In fact, we often see the Buddha himself purposely using common religious and social terms, especially those of the brahmins and the Jains, and giving them new senses by ethicizing or by demythologizing them.[66]

6.3.3.3 Furthermore, there is the problem of aesthetics and English idiom if we render *puñña* as "fortune-bringing action" (as Cousins suggests) in the above passage: "Fear not fortune-bringing action, bhikshus! It is, bhikshus, another name for happiness, which is pleasing, dearly loved, and delightful, that is to say, fortune-bringing action." "When I use a word," as Humpty Dumpty says in *Through the Looking-glass,* "it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less."[67] The point is that we give meaning to words, and to be consistent about it.

6.4 *KUSALA AND PUÑÑA*

6.4.1 In the early canon, the word *puñña* occurs less frequently[68] than *kusala,* and found mainly in connection with giving (*dāna*),[69] the lay life,[70] and mundane goals (such as heavenly rebirth).[71] An ancient

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[64] For a discussion on etym, see Cousins 1996:153 f.

[65] Cousins 1996:155. He qu & tr this **Cakka,vatti Sīha,nāda S** refrain**:** *kusalānaṁ bhikkhave dhammānaṁ samā-dāna,hetu evam idaṁ puññaṁ pavaḍḍhatî ti,* "By reason of the undertaking of skillful *dhammas*, monks, in this way this good fortune increases" (D 26/3:58, 79; cf 73 f): see 1996 n75.

[66] "Ethicizing" means rejecting ritualist or limited senses of the old terms and using them in broader sense to inspire personal accountability. See esp **KR Norman**: "Common terminology in early Buddhist and Jain texts." *Jainology: Manifold facets (Pt Jaganmohanlal Shastri Sadhuvad Grantha).* Rewa, 1989:393-397; in KR Norman, *Collected Papers* vol 4 (essay 98), Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1993:264-270, & "Theravāda Buddhism and brahmanical Hinduism: Brahmanical terms in a Buddhist guise," in *The Buddhist Forum* II seminar papers 1988-90, ed Tadeusz Korupski. London: Univ of London (SOAS), 1991:193-200; repr in *Collected Papers* IV (essay 99), Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1993:271-280.

[67] Lewis Carroll 1871 ch 6. See **Saññā**, SD 17.4(2.3).

[68] Cousins: "The Mahidol CD (Budsir 4.0) counts 150 word forms beginning with *puññ-* in the *tipiṭaka* (211 from °*puññ-*) as against 323 beginning with *kusal-.* In total some 1,285 occurrences are listed for *puññ-,* as against 7,526 for *kusal-.* The latter figure is inflated by references in the *Abhidhamma-piṭaka,* but *kusal-* is still more frequent in the earliest texts. For example *kusalaṁ* occurs 105 times in Vin[aya], as against 12 times for *puññaṁ,* and 191 times

Buddha legend gives a good example of the early canonical view of *puñña*: in **the Padhāna Sutta** (Sn 3.2), Māra is recounted to have approached the meditating Bodhisattva practising the austerities, ironically speaking "compassionate words" (*karuṇaṁ vācaṁ*), coaxing him to give up his painful quest for awakening:

> *Namuci karuṇaṁ vācaṁ bhāsamāno upāgami*
> *kiso tvam asi dubbaṇṇo santike maraṇaṁ tava*

> Namuci [he who frees none][72] went up to him saying compassionate words:
> "You are thin, of a bad colour: you are in the presence of death!   (Sn 426)

> *Sahassa,bhāgo maraṇassa ekaṁso tava jīvitaṁ*[73]
> *jīva bho jīvitaṁ seyyo jīvaṁ puññāni kāhasi*

> A thousand parts of you belongs to death, only one to life:
> Live, sir! Living is better. <u>If you live, you can make merit</u>."   (Sn 427)

> <u>*Anu,mattena puññena attho mayhaṁ na vijjati*</u>
> *yesañ ca attho puññānaṁ te Māro vattum arahati*

> <u>I have no need of even the tiniest bit [minutest measure] of merit</u>:
> Māra should speak to those who want merit.   (Sn 431)

6.4.2 Apparently here *puñña* means not only "fortune-bringing actions," but also the good karmic fruits (*puñña,phala*), as noted by the Commentators.[74] The Bodhisattva is declaring that he has no interest in *puñña*—the "good" of the old religions—but in something more liberating, which is technically called *kusala,* usually translated as "wholesome" or "skillful."

Occasionally, *kusala* is said to overcome *pāpa* (or, as we shall see below, *apuñña,* its synonym). Indeed, it is only *kusala* that effectively overcomes *pāpa,* in the sense of transcending both aspects of samsaric reality, that is, good and evil. In this sample quote, we see *kusala* referring to a person himself:

Dadato puññaṁ pavaḍḍhati	Merit grows for the giver,
saṁyamato veraṁ na cīyati	enmity grows not for the restrained,
<u>*kusalo ca jahāti pāpakaṁ*</u>	<u>the skillful abandons evil</u>:
rāga,dosa,moha-k,khayā sanibbuto ti	with the destruction of lust, hate and delusion—
	he is cooled. (U 85)

6.4.3 Sinhalese scholar **P D Premasiri**, in his paper, "Interpretation of two principal ethical terms in early Buddhism," attempts to differentiate the usages of *puñña* and *kusala* (1976). He points out that there is some overlapping, but, **puñña** is most often used in regard to *actions intended to bring about future good*

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in the first four *nikāyas,* as against 119. *Puññ-,* however, is more frequent in the *Khuddaka-nikāya,* if Paṭis[ambhidā] is excluded (as being an *abhidhamma* text)." (1996:164 n72)

[69] Eg "one who knows, desiring merit, should give" (*puññam ākaṅkhamānena | deyyaṁ hoti vijānatā ti,* S 85*/ 1.32/1:18 = 95*/1.33/1:20).

[70] Eg Soṇa Kolivisa, unable to progress in his meditation, thinks of returning to lay life, "Suppose that I, having returned to the low life, were to enjoy my possessions and to make merit?" (*Yan nūnâhaṁ hīnāy'āvattitvā bhoge ca bhuñjeyyaṁ, puññāni ca kareyyan ti,* V 1:182)

[71] Eg "Merit is the support for beings in the next world" (*puññāni para,lokasmiṁ patiṭṭhā honti pāṇinan ti,* S *87/- 1.32/1:18 = *146/1.43/1:32 = *339/2.23/1:59 = A 5.36/3:41).

[72] An epithet of Māra. For a folk etym, see SnA 386, cf 390 (*Kaṇha*); also E J Thomas, *History of Buddhist Thought,* 2nd ed, 1951: 146.

[73] Cf Lalita,vistara: *sahasra,bhāge maraṇaṁ eka,bhāge ca jīvitaṁ* (Lalv 261,11). KR Norman suggest an idiomatic tr as "The odds on death are one thousand to one." (Sn:N 227 n427)

[74] By Buddhaghosa (MA 2:283) & Dhammapāla (ItA 1:73 f).

karmic results. **Kusala**, on the other hand, is *only used in connection with the Buddha's teaching*. Cousins notes

> Indeed, one may go further and suggest that *puñña* was almost certainly not a technical term in the thought of the Buddha and his early disciples. It was no doubt <u>a part of the background of beliefs current at the time</u>, although there is certainly no reason to suppose that they objected to the notion as such. Of course their understanding as to what constitutes *puñña* would not necessarily be the same as that of all their contemporaries.   (1996:154 f; emphasis added)

6.4.4 John Ross Carter, in an instructive study, "Beyond 'Beyond good and evil'" (1984) suggests that Premasiri's comments could be further refined:

> Perhaps, two refinements of Premasiri's noteworthy contribution might be made. Firstly, the overlapping in meaning of *kusala* and *puñña* in the Nikāyas tends to be present in those passages <u>where *kusala* suggests one's volition with regard to thought, speech and action</u>. Where there is a distinction between *kusala* and *puñña*, the semantic function of *kusala* has to do primarily with <u>qualities (*dhammā*) with which a person is endowed</u>.
> Secondly, although the Pali commentarial and Sinhalese Buddhist literary tradition has tended to fuse *kusala* and *puñña*,[75] of which Premasiri generally is aware, the commentarial tradition maintains the distinction that Premasiri argued was the case of the early period of the Buddhist tradition. Premasiri notes that the later tradition was aware of this distinction but does not go into the matter, save for two references.[76]   (Carter 1984:48; emphases added)

6.4.5 A good example of the overlapping of *kusala* and *puñña,* as noted by Carter here, is an old verse from **the Mettânisaṁsa Sutta** (A 8.1) and **the Metta Bhāvanā Sutta** (It 1.3.7). It is old because it is also found in **the Gāndhārī Dharmapada**:[77]

Ekam pi ce pāṇam aduṭṭha,citto	If he has a hate-free mind for even a single living being,
*mettāyati **kusalī**[78] tena hoti*	he shows lovingkindness: he is thereby **wholesome**.
sabbe'va pāṇe manasā'nukampī	He has a mind of compassion towards all life,
*pahūtam ariyo pakaroti **puññaṁ***	a noble one creates abundant **good** [merit].

<div align="center">(A 8.1/4:151 (SD 30.6) = It 1.3.7/21 (SD 30.7) = Dh:G 195)</div>

The context here is that of lovingkindness cultivation, which on a mundane level at least generates great merit for one, as often stated in the Suttas.[79] On a supramundane level, lovingkindness naturally exudes from the saints, especially the arhats.

6.4.6 We see the antonym, *apuñña,* as essentially used in the sense of *akusala,* in **the Alagaddû-pama Sutta** (M 22) passage, where the Buddha points out the error of Ariṭṭha's view that sensual enjoyment is not a stumbling to a monk's spiritual development:

> *Atha ca panâyaṁ Ariṭṭho bhikkhu gaddhabādhi,pubbo attanā duggahītena amhe c'eva abbhācikkhati. Attānañ ca khaṇati. Bahuñ ca **apuññaṁ** pasavati. Taṁ hi tassa mogha,purisassa bhavissati dīgha,rattaṁ ahitāya dukkhāya.*

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[75] DhA 1:153 (on Dh 18): *kata,puñño ti nāna-p,pakarassa puññassa kattā, 'ubhayatthā ti idha katam me kusalaṁ akataṁ pāpan ti nandati parattha vipākaṁ anubhavanto nandati…* (One who has done *puñña:* a doer of various kinds of *puñña.* 'At both places;' here he rejoices, thinking, '*kusala* (acts) have been done by me, *pāpa* (acts) have not been done.' In the hereafter he rejoices experiencing the fruits (of actions done here)." See also DhA 1:132 (on Dh 16). Carter also mentions later Sinhalese comys. See 1984:53 n25.

[76] Nc 90; DA 3:848: see Premasiri 1976 (2006:87 f)

[77] *Eka bi ya praṇa aduṭha-citu | metrayadi kuśala teṇa bhodi | sarve ya praṇa maṇasaṇu'abadi | prahona ari'a prakarodi puñu* (Dh:G 195). See SD 22.8 (3.3).

[78] Ce PTS; Se *kusalaṁ.*

[79] See eg **Cūḷ'accharā S** (A 1.6.3-5/1:10 f), SD 2.13; **Okkhā S** (S 20.4/2:264), SD 2.14.

But this monk Ariṭṭha, formerly of the vulture killers, misrepresents us by his wrong grasp and injures himself and stores up much **demerit**. For this will lead to this misguided one's harm and pain for a long time.   (M 22.8/1:133) = SD 3.13

6.4.6 Sometimes, we see *pāpa* and *akusala* used together, suggesting that they are synonymous or their senses overlap, as in this stock passage:

Here, brahmin, on ⟨seeing **a form** with the eye,…cognizing **a mind-object** with the mind⟩, a monk does not grasp at its signs or its details.[80] For, on account of dwelling without restraint over ⟨the eye-faculty..the mind-faculty⟩, the evil unwholesome qualities of covetousness or discontent might assail him.   (M 27.15/1:180 f = 33.7/1:221 = 33.19/1:223 = 38.35/1:269 = 39.8/1:273, etc)

Here, "evil unwholesome qualities (*pāpakā akusalā dhammā*) of covetousness or discontent" refer to the five mental hindrances that are usually listed in full later in the same text. In this case, the hindrances are *pāpakā* because they are not beneficial for worldly karma, and are *akusala* because they not conducive for higher spiritual cultivation (that is, meditation).

6.4.7 By way of summary, it can be said that *puñña* in the early popular sense merely refers to good karma that bear fruit for worldly happiness or a good rebirth (but not spiritual liberation in the Buddhist sense): in the Padhāna Sutta passage above, Māra is an allegory of the old *puñña*-centred order. The Buddha and the early saints skillfully use *puñña* by ethicizing it to include those wholesome actions that leads to liberation, stressing on the latter [6.3].

L S Cousins suggests the semantic development of *kusala* to be as follows:

1. An original meaning of "intelligent" or "wise" [*cheka*].[81]
2. Expert in magical and sacrificial ritual (in the *Brāhmaṇas*);[82] for brahmins, of course, this would precisely constitute wisdom.
   - Skilled in meditational/mystical (/ascetic?) practices (in the early Pali sources and, no doubt, in other contemporary traditions), including skilled in the kind of behaviour which supports meditation, etc, ie *sīla*, etc.
   - Skilled in performing *dāna* and *yañña*, now interpreted in terms of Buddhist ethical concerns; and associated with keeping the precepts and so on.
3. *Kusala,* in later Buddhist and Jain sources, becomes generalized to refer to something like wholesome or good states.

So there is no reason to doubt that by a later period (ie in the commentaries and perhaps later canonical sources) *kusala* in non-technical contexts meant something which could be translated as "good."   (Cousins 1996:156; diacritics normalized)

6.4.8 However, *puñña* and *kusala,* they only work for the individual *before* his awakening. **The Sumanā Sutta** (A 5.31)—where the Buddha answers the questions of the princess Sumanā—is significantly instructive here. In the case two disciples equal in faith, in moral virtue and in wisdom, one is a giver of alms, but the other is not, whether they are reborn in a celestial realm or the human realm, the giver would

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[80] *Na nimitta-g,gāhī hoti nânuvyañjana-g,gāhī,* lit "he is not one who grasps at a <u>sign</u>, he is not one who grasps at a <u>detail</u> (feature)." Comys say that "**appearance**"(*nimitta*) here refers to a grasping arising through one's sensual lust (*chanda,rāga,vasena*) or on account of one's view (*diṭṭhi,matta,vasena*); "**feature**" (*anuvyañjana*) here refers to finding delight by grasping at another's limb or body part (eyes, arms, legs, etc) (Nm 2:390; Nc 141, 141; DhsA 400, 402; cf MA 1:75, 4:195; SA 3:4, 394; Nc 1:55; DhA 1:74). On other meanings of *nimitta,* see SD 13 §3.1a.

[81] BA 49; PmA 1:129, 205 f; DhsA 38 ff; Abhāv v11; cf SnA 503 (where we have *iṭṭha,phala* instead of *sukha,- vipāka*, and *kosalla,sam,bhūta* instead of *cheka*).

[82] Perhaps the oldest extant source is Aitreya Brāhmaṇa 7.18: *na te kuśalaṁ menire*; cf Chāndogya Upaniṣad 4.10.2. (Cousins 1996:150)

surpass the non-giver in lifespan, beauty, happiness, fame and power. However, *when they attain arhat-hood, there is not difference at all between them.*[83]

6.6 *PĀRAMĪ AND PĀRAMITĀ*

6.6.1 Here we digress to discuss another set of quality that has no unwholesome counterpart, that is, the "perfections," *pāramī* (P) or *pāramitā* (Skt). These are the wholesome qualities of a Bodhisattva, a being cultivating to become the future Buddha. The Pali tradition uses the term **pāramī,** deriving it from *parama* (supreme), and taking it to mean "completeness, perfection, highest state" (PED). It refers to <u>the ten virtues that lead to Buddhahood</u>: (1) giving (*dāna*), (2) moral virtue (*sīla*), (3) renunciation (*nekkhamma*), (4) wisdom (*paññā*), (5) energy (*viriya*), (6) patience (*khanti*), (7) truthfulness (*sacca*), (8) resolution (*adhiṭṭhāna*), (9) lovingkindness (*mettā*), and (10) equanimity (*upekkhā*).[84]

The term *pāramī,* as used in the later texts, is not found in the early texts, but commonly appear in the Jātakas,[85] the Buddha,vaṁsa[86] and the Cariyā,piṭaka.[87] The earliest mention of *pāramī* is in the Sutta Nipāta: *mantesu pāramiṁ brūhi,* "Tell (me) of (his) perfection in Vedic mantras" (Sn 1018/195), but is clearly not a technical term. The ten perfections, as already mentioned, are found in the Buddha,vaṁsa (id).[88] The Cariyā,piṭaka Commentary in listing the ten perfections notes, "But some say they are sixfold" (*keci pana chabbidhâ ti vadanti,* CA 277),[89] and goes on to list the six perfections "**by their specific nature: giving, moral virtue, patience, energy, dhyana, and wisdom**" (*dāna,sīla,khanti,vīriya,jhāna,-paññā,sabhāvena,* CA 321).[90]

6.6.2 The Cariyā,piṭaka references to the six perfections evidently shows that this shorter list (used by the Mahayana) is older. The Mahayana, however, used the term **pāramitā,** deriving it from: *param* ("across, farther shore") + *ita* ("gone," from √I, to go).[91] The Mahayanists apparently in due course up-graded their list of six perfection (*dāna, śīla, kṣānti, vīrya, dhyāna, prajñā*) to ten, adding "skillful means" (*upāya, kauśalya*), "vow" (*praṇidhāna*), "strength [power]" (*bala*), and "knowledge" (*jñāna*), so that they each complement each of the ten Bodhisattva stages (*bodhisattva,bhūmi*).[92] Indian scholar **Har Dayal** thinks that

> This alteration may have been due to the rivalry with the Hīnayānists, who had devised the Pāli formula of the ten *pāramīs*… But it is more probable that the number of the *pāramitās* (and the *bhūmis*) was raised to ten as a consequence of the invention of the decimal system of computation in the science of arithmetic in the third or fourth century AD.[93]   (Dayal 1932:167)

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[83] A 5.31/2:62 f, SD 22.14. Cf **(Saddhā) Jāṇussoṇī S** (A 10.177) on the fate of <u>the giver who does not keep the precepts</u>, ie, he would be reborn as an animal (elephant, horse, cow, or chicken) that is well cared for! (A 10.177.7-b/5:271 f), SD 2.6. See also **Mahā Vaccha,gotta S** (M 73), SD 27.4 (4.1)

[84] B 2a.117-166/16-20; J 1:45-47, 1:73 & CA 276-335: see Bodhi 1978:254-330 (pt 4: A Treatise on the Paramis, tr from CA).

[85] J 1:45-47, 1:73.

[86] B 2a.117-166/16-20.

[87] See IB Horner (tr), *Basket of Conduct* (C:H), in Minor Anthologies III ser (SBB 31), London: PTS, 1975, esp Pref. The Cariyā,piṭaka, a post-Asokan work, gives only stories regarding the perfections of giving, of moral virtue, renunciation, resolution, of truthfulness, and of lovingkindness. It is likely to be an incomplete work or sections of it are lost (see C:H vi f).

[88] See IB Horner (tr), *Chronicle of Buddhas* (B:H), in Minor Anthologies III ser (SBB 31), London: PTS, 1975, esp Pref & Intro.

[89] See Bodhi 1978:255.

[90] See Bodhi 1978:314.

[91] See SED 163c, sv *i* **(5),** & 619c. See also Har Dayal, *The Bodhisattva Doctrine in Buddhist Sanskrit Literature,* 1932:165-269 (ch V).

[92] See Dayal 1932:270-291 (ch VI).

[93] AFR Hoernle assigns the contents of the Bakhshālī MS to that period (*Indian Antiquities* 17 1888:36b). As further Dayal notes, "The oldest epigraphical evidence for this remarkable discovery date from the sixth century, and the literary evidence belongs to the same period, as the system is employed by Varāhamihira (JG Bühler, *Indian Paleography*, Bombay, 1904:78). See Dayal 1932:167 f.

The six and ten perfections are unique in that they are like transitory stages between the dichotomous good-and-evil world in which the Bodhisattva trains himself so that he perfects himself into a Buddha. And as the Buddha, he transcends the world so that with those perfections, he is beyond and evil.

7 The problem of the transcendency thesis

7.1 DAMIEN KEOWN. British Buddhologist, **Damien Keown,** in his seminal study on *The Nature of Buddhist Ethics* (1992) has argued[94] that "moral and intellectual perfection are integral components of the Buddhist *summum bonum*" (1992:83). Against this view is the notion that "morality is at best a preliminary to enlightenment and at worst an obstacle to its attainment" (id), a proposal put forward by Winston King (1964) and by Melford Spiro (1970) [5.1], although other writers have also adopted such a position.[95]

Amongst them, Keown (1992:7) mentions **K N Jayatilleke**, who is of the opinion that Buddhist ethic is "a form of enlightened egoism or enlightened altruism, which could best be characterized as an ethical universalism," but paradoxically, however, "the egoist must develop altruistic virtues for his own good" (1970:195). On the question of relativism and absolutism, Jayatilleke thinks that the Buddhist ethical theory "appears to be teleological rather than deontological,"[96] that is to say, right actions are a means to the final good. "What is instrumentally good to achieve this end is regarded as good as a means. They consist mainly of right actions and the other factors that help in bringing about what is ultimately good" (1970a:262). In short, moral virtue (or goodness) is merely a means to an end, and has no role thereafter.

7.2 THE SCAFFOLD THEORY. Keown has strongly and persuasively argued against "the transcendency thesis" [1], that a person's religious attainment puts him or her above all moral constraints, that knowledge transcends ethics.[97] The main argument used by Keown is that proponents of the transcendency thesis "agree that the spheres of *kamma* and *nibbāna* are distinct and can never meet" (1992:89), and points to two versions of this view. The first view, which Keown calls the "**scaffold theory**," is that of **Winston L King**, who in *In the Hope of Nibbana* (1964a), holds the weaker hypothesis that *puñña* leads in the direction of nirvana, but must finally be discarded before nirvana is attained.

As King himself puts it, "Kammic goodness is the necessary but not sufficient condition for either the saintly life or the attainment of Nibbana. True perfection is transcendent of all kammic values." (1964: 67). Keown calls this the "scaffold theory" because it "envisages merit as a means of raising oneself upward towards a higher goal" (id). However, as Keown himself notes, King, in *A Thousand Lives Away* (1964b)*,* adopts a position practically identical to his own in speaking of *sīla* as "kammic good" and actually contradicts the karma/nirvana opposition (expressed in 1964a), when he says

> One cannot say that Sila is first perfected and then left behind when one reaches Samadhi and Paññā stages—even though there is talk of rising above mere morality as one progresses in the meditative life. For even the meditating saint remains moral in his actions. Indeed his saintliness, at least in part, is the perfection of his morality, the turning from mere observance of external standards to the spontaneous exercise of inward virtues. So it is that morality is never left behind.
> (1964b:188)

7.3 KARMA/NIRVANA OPPOSITION

7.3.1 **Melford Spiro**'s general view is more radical than King's scaffold theory. Spiro holds that karma is entirely fatal to the quest for nirvana. Dividing Buddhism into "kammatic" and "nibbanic," he claims that the two were originally distinct [Fig 5.1], and that confusion had arisen from an attempt in the past to combine them, as he notes in his *Buddhism and Society*:

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[94] D Keown, 1992 chs 1-3.

[95] See Keown 1992 ch 1, esp pp7-18.

[96] 1970:197 = 1972:67.

[97] See esp ch 4 (1992:83-105) & index. Others who have argued against this radical disjunction knowledge and ethics incl Harvey Aronson 1979, 1980, & Nathan Katz 1982. Both of them reject the King-Spiro transcendency thesis [5.1].

It should be apparent, then, that the attempted integration of the doctrine of nirvana with the doc-
trine of karma has produced an inherent and complex "double-bind."

Whereas according to the doctrine of nirvana (in which even the blissful life of a *deva* is a
detour rather than a way station on the road to salvation), *saṁsāra* and nirvana comprise two
distinctive and discontinuous planes of existence, by contrast, according to the doctrine of karma
they comprise one hedonistic continuum, ranging from the suffering of hell at the one pole to the
nonsuffering of nirvana at the other.

And whereas according to the doctrine of karma samsaric pleasure is the just and proper
reward for (Buddhist) moral action, according to the doctrine of nirvana this is not only an
illusion but a snare, diverting one from the quest for true salvation; hence such pleasures should
not be sought, and if achieved, should not be cathected.[98]

Hence the antinomies in nibbanic Buddhism: the consequence of moral action is a pleasant
rebirth which, on the one hand, it holds out as a reward (while denigrating the pursuit as un-
worthy of a true Buddhist), but which, on the other hand—since all samsaric existence is pain-
ful—it sees as a persistence of suffering (although it is the harvest of action which it itself
requires).   (Spiro 1982:69; reparagraphed)

7.3.2 Spiro views that only meditation leads to nirvana, and all else, "even moral action, is sub-
versive of salvation, for morality produces karma, which in turn causes rebirth" (1982:93). According to
Spiro, **"nibbanic" Buddhism** is based on *paññā* (wisdom) without *puñña* (wisdom)*,* while **"kammatic"
Buddhism** is based on *puñña* without *paññā*. Keown's here instructively speaks for most followers of
early Buddhism:

Both King and Spiro seem to overlook the fact that meditation (*bhāvanā*), along with generosity
(*dāna*) and morality (*sīla*), is specified in canonical sources as one of the three Meritorious Act-
ions (*puñña-kiriya-vatthu*).[99] The practice of meditation, then, would be as soteriologically coun-
terproductive as any other kind of meritorious act.   (Keown 1992:90)

7.3.3 The view of King and Spiro is not unprecedented, for a similar position seems to have been
advocated by the Chinese Northern Chan monk named **Heshang Mohoyan**[100] (Skt Mahayana) in his
debate with **Kamalaśīla** (740-795)[101] during the council at Samye monastery (792-794), before the
Tibetan king, Trisong Detsen. Tibetan historian Bu ston (1290-1364) records Mohoyan as saying:

If you commit virtuous or non-virtuous deeds, because you go to heavens and hells, (you still) are
not liberated from *saṁsāra*. The path to Buddhahood is obscured… Whoever does not think any-
thing; the one who does not ponder will become completely liberated from *saṁsāra*…he is in-
stantaneously enlightened. He is equal to one who has mastered the tenth *bhūmi*.

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[98] "Catechted" = aroused.

[99] The canonical set comprises these 3: meritorious action (*puñña*) consisting in giving (*dāna,maya p*), moral vir-
tue (*sīla,maya p*), mental cultivation (*bhāvanā,maya p*) (D 3:218; A 4:239; It 51). Comys expand the set to 10, ie,
meritorious action consisting in: (1-3), (4) humility or reverence (*apacāya,maya*), (5) service (*veyyāvacca,maya*), (6)
sharing of merit (*patti,dāna,maya*), (7) rejoicing in other's merit (*pattānumodanā,maya*); (8) listening to the Dharma
(*dhamma,savannā,maya*); (9) teaching the Dharma (*dhamma,desanā,maya*); (10) straightening one's views (*diṭṭh'-
uju,kamma*) (DA 3:999; Abhs:BRS 5.24/209; Abhs:SR 146. It is interesting to see how the commentarial list is more
faith-oriented and this worldly.

[100] Heshang 和尚, vll Hvashang, Hoshang; Mohoyan 摩訶衍. The transliteration is in simplified pinyin.

[101] A pupil of Śānta,rakṣita (the greatest Buddhist scholar of his time) at Nalanda, India. Śānta,rakṣita was instru-
mental in bringing Buddhism to Tibet, while Padmasambhava successfully established it as her predominant reli-
gion.

(*Bhūmi,* Bodhisattva stage; Bu ston)[102]

In other words, for Mohoyan, awakening has nothing to do with moral virtue. Since good and bad deeds bring rebirth in heaven and in hell, they bind one to further rebirth. Awakening lies in cutting off all thought and mental activity. Awakening is instantaneous, without any conceptual stages to non-conceptual awakening.

Kamala,śīla, as the speaker for Tantric Mahayana rebuts that if Mohoyan were right, then no wisdom could be gained through conceptual activity; but surely liberating wisdom is the *result* of conceptual activity, of analyzing whether there is inherent existence. How can insight arise in a state of no-thought? Tibetan Buddhist tradition says that Kamala,śīla defeated Mohoyan, and this led to the general acceptance of Indian Mahāyāna in Tibet.[103]

7.3.4 Without going further into abstruse philosophical discussion, it is sufficient to say here that like Keown,

> I wish only to show *contra* King and Spiro that there need be no ontological discontinuity between ethical perfection and enlightenment. In particular I wish to repudiate the claim that the attainment of perfection necessitates the transcendence or rejection of ethical values and marks the entry to a state beyond good and evil.   (Keown 1992:91 f)

8 Misconceptions regarding arhats and morality

8.1 MISCONCEIVED IMAGERY

8.1.1 Damien Keown, in *The Nature of Buddhist Ethics* (1992), points out misinterpretations of two important Buddhist imageries, that is, the two famous parable of **the Alagaddûpama Sutta** (M 22):[104] the parables of the water snake[105] and of the raft.[106] The theme of the Sutta reflects a common problem with the shadow of religion in general and celibate monasticism in particular, that is, sexuality is not a hindrance to spiritual training. The Sutta opens with the monk Ariṭṭha having this wrong view: "As I understand the Dharma taught by the Blessed One, those things called 'obstructions'[107] by the Blessed One are not able to obstruct one who indulges in them."[108]

When the matter is brought before the Buddha, he emphatically declares that he has always taught that *sensual pleasures are a hindrance to spiritual development*. The point here is not that the body is evil, but that it is made up of the four elements or phases of matter (earth, water, fire and wind), and as such are in a constant flux. It is the mind or consciousness that one should really deal with as it the only means to a direct experience of reality. In meditation, one shuts down the physical sense-doors, as it were, and attends to the mind singly and directly. It is as if one has to first switch off the car engine, open the

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[102] From GW Houston (tr), *Sources for a History of the bSam yas Debate,* Sankt Augustin: VGH Wissenschaft-verlag, 1980:93

[103] The whole debate according to the records we have today is very complicated; for the Chinese texts claim that it is Hoshang Mahayan who won the debate, but the point remains that Indian Mahāyāna came to predominate Tibetan Buddhism. See Paul Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism,* 1989:193-197.

[104] M 22/1:130-142 @ SD 3.13.

[105] M 22.10/1:133 f @ SD 3.13.

[106] M 22.13-14/1:134 f @ SD 3.13.

[107] "Obstructions" (*antarāyikā dhammā*). Comy says that the term means "intentionally transgressing the seven classes of offences. For intentional transgression, even an offence of wrongdoing or of wrong speech hinders the fruit of the way." Comy here gives a list of ideas and deeds that obstruct either heavenly birth or final deliverance or both. But here sexual intercourse (*methuna,dhamma*), is meant (MA 2:33). See V 1:93, 115, S 2:226, Thī 492, Vism 215, MA 3:102. See V:H 3:21 n5 (on Pāc 68).

[108] In making this statement, Ariṭṭha directly contradicts the third of the four intrepidities of the Buddha. Because of the Buddha's awakening, no one can justly charge that: (1) he is not fully enlightened, (2) he has not fully destroyed his defilements, (3) those obstructions to the spiritual life declared by the Buddha are not obstructions, (4) the Dharma properly practised does not lead to the goal declared by the Buddha. (M 12.25).

hood, and dismantle the engine for a complete overhaul and reassembly so that everything runs well or better after that.

8.1.2 In **the parable of the raft,** the Buddha relates how "a man in the course of his journey saw a great stretch of water, whose near shore is dangerous and fearful and whose far shore is safe and free from fear, but there is no ferry or bridge for going across to the far shore." So he "collects grass, wood, branches and leaves, and binds them together into a raft, and supported by the raft and using his hands and feet, goes safely across to the far shore." Having safely crossed the waters, he leaves the makeshift raft behind and goes "wherever he wishes." At the end of the parable, the Buddha declares:

> Even so I have shown you that the Dharma is comparable to a raft, which is for crossing over (the waters to the far shore), not for the purpose of grasping.
> Bhikshus, having known the parable of the raft, you should abandon even the Dharma, how much more that which is not Dharma![109]

Largely on the basis of these two sentences, some have misconstrued[110] that "ethics in Buddhism has only a provisional and instrumental status and may—even must—be discarded when it has fulfilled its function of ferrying the practitioner to the further [sic] shore of enlightenment," just as one would not be foolish enough to carry around a makeshift raft after one's journey is done (Keown 1992:92).

8.1.3 Keown points to two famous examples of the misconception of this parable of the raft, that is, those by I B (1950:1) and G Dharmasiri (1986:183), to mean that the arhat, being "beyond good and evil," is above morality.[111] In *The Basic Position of Sīla*, **Horner** writes:

> Morality is to be left behind…like a raft once the crossing over has been safely accomplished. In other words, the *arahat* is above good and evil, and has transcended both.   (1950:1)

And a more recent example is **G Dharmasiri**, who, in *Fundamentals of Buddhist Ethics,* writes:

> Here one goes beyond morality. That is why an Arahant has been described as having gone beyond both good and bad. He has transcended ordinary morality.   (1986:183)

Many scholars, and even those with a vague notion of Buddhism, are rightly or wrongly familiar with such a view. However, although recent scholars have shown some dissatisfaction with this view,[112] it was apparently Damien Keown who was the first to offer a comprehensive critical analysis of it, in his *The Nature of Buddhist Ethics* (1992: ch 4).

8.1.4 The first problem with the view that arhats are beyond morality is that the misconception is based largely on a misreading of the two sentences of the Alagaddûpama Sutta above. For, as we shall presently see, there are numerous passages in the Suttas attesting to *the supreme moral virtue of the saints*, especially the arhats [7].

Secondly, if the view that arhats are beyond morality is true, why is this important fact not pointed out explicitly by the Buddha?

> Apart from the Buddha, the Theravāda tradition itself seems reticent on the matter, and there appears to be no evidence that it understood the parable in the way suggested. On the contrary, the evidence is that it did not. Nor do any Mahāyāna sources appear to take the parable as signi-

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[109] *Dhammā pi vo pahātabbā pag'eva adhammā*. See Keown 1992 ch esp pp92-102 for a detailed study. See also **Alagaddûpama S** (M 22), SD 3.13 Introd (2).

[110] More often in the early days of modern Buddhist studies (before 2000), than in recent times. After 2000, with the publication of Roger Jackson & John Makransky (eds), *Buddhist Theology*, scholars of Buddhism generally are open enough to declare themselves as *Buddhist* scholars, too, ie, are also practitioners, or are more experientially informed of their field.

[111] Henri van Zeyst, similarly, takes nirvana to mean the transcendence of ethical values (1961:143 f). Apparently, this wrong view is more common in intellectual or academic Buddhism than in traditional Buddhism. [9.5]

[112] Eg John Ross Carter, "Beyond 'Beyond good and evil'" (1984).

ficant in an ethical sense. We might expect it to be cited frequently by texts which seek greater
moral latitude for *bodhisattvas*, but it does not appear to be used in this way. (Keown 1992:94)

The one who has "crossed over" to the far shore (nirvana) is one who has left behind all his defilements,
especially the latent tendencies of lust, ill will and ignorance. That being the case, it is obvious that there
is no question that even the thought of greed, hate or delusion would arising in such a saint.

   8.2 FORDS AND BANKS. In the early texts, the imagery of <u>fords</u> (*tittha*), is understandably common.
Streams and rivers had to be crossed as safe points or where there are rafts or boats. The monsoons
worsened the situation by bringing floods, making it harder to cross the waters. In such situations, it is
common to regard high and dry land, such as the river banks as safe ground. For the traveller, the far
shore is not only the immediate destination, but also safer ground. As such, the far shore is often used to
represent nirvana, to journey's end in the pilgrim's progress. Here we have two short suttas fully translat-
ed, but being teachings to Saṅgārava, showing that the "far shore" representing moral perfection and the
realization of the path.

SD 18.7(8.2a)   **(Magga) Saṅgārava Sutta**

The Discourse to Saṅgārava (on the Path) | A 10.169/5:252 f
Theme: Our actions are like riverbanks

   1   Then the brahmin Saṅgārava approached the Blessed One and exchanged greetings with him.
When the friendly and cordial talk have been concluded, he sat down at one side.
   Seated thus at one side, the brahmin Saṅgārava said this to the Blessed One:
   "What, master Gotama, is the near shore (*orimaṁ tīraṁ*)?
   What is the far shore (*pārimaṁ tīraṁ*)?"
   2   "Brahmin,

The destruction of life is the near shore;	refraining from the destruction of life is the far shore.
Taking the not-given is the near shore;	refraining from taking the not-given is the far shore.
Sexual misconduct is the near shore;	refraining from misconduct is the far shore.
False speech is the near shore;	refraining from false speech is the far shore.
Slander is the near shore;	refraining from slander is the far shore.
Harsh speech is the near shore;	refraining from harsh speech is the far shore.
Frivolous talk is the near shore;	refraining from frivolous talk is the far shore.
Covetousness is the near shore;	refraining from covetousness is the far shore.
Ill will is the near shore;	refraining from ill will is the far shore.
Wrong view is the near shore;	refraining from wrong view is the far shore.

This, brahmin, is the near shore; this, brahmin, is the far shore."

> *Appakā te manussesu | ye janā pāragāmino*
> *athâyaṁ itarā pajā | tīram evânudhāvati*

>> Few are those amongst humans who cross over to the far shore,
>> But the rest of mankind only run about on this bank.   [Dh 85]

> *Ye ca kho samma,dakkhāte | dhamme dhammânuvattino*
> *te janā pāram essanti | maccu,dheyyaṁ suduttaraṁ*

>> But those who, when the rightly taught Dharma, follow the Dharma,
>> These people will go to the far shore: the realm of death is hard to cross.   [Dh 86]

> *Kaṇhaṁ dhammaṁ vippahāya | sukkaṁ bhāvetha paṇḍito*
> *okā anokaṁ āgamma | viveke yattha dūramaṁ*

Abandoning the dark states, the wise should cultivate the white.
Having come from the home into homelessness for a solitude hard to delight in.   [Dh 87]

Tatrâbhiratim iccheyya | hitvā kāme akiñcano
pariyodapeyya attānaṃ | citta,klesehi paṇḍito

Having given up sense-pleasures, having nothing, he should seek delight therein.
The wise should cleanse himself of mental defilements.   [Dh 88]

Yesaṁ sambodhi aṅgesu sammā cittaṁ subhāvitaṁ
ādāna,paṭinissagge anupādāya ye ratā
khīṇāsavā jutīmanto te loke parinibbutā ti.

Of those whose mind is well developed in the awakening factors,
who, unclinging, delight in the letting go of clinging:
they, with influxes destroyed, attain nirvana in the world.   [Dh 89]

— evaṁ —

SD 18.7(8.2b)   (Kamma,patha) Saṅgārava Sutta

The Discourse to Saṅgārava (on the Courses of Action) | A 10.117/5:232 f
Theme: The riverbanks as courses of actions

1   Then the brahmin Saṅgārava approached the Blessed One and exchanged greetings with him.
When the friendly and cordial talk have been concluded, he sat down at one side.
Seated thus at one side, the brahmin Saṅgārava said this to the Blessed One:
"What, master Gotama, is the near shore (*orimaṁ tīraṁ*)?
What is the far shore (*pārimaṁ tīraṁ*)?"
2   "Brahmin,

Wrong view is the near shore,	right view is the far shore.
Wrong intention [thought] is the near shore,	right intention [thought] is the far shore.
Wrong speech is the near shore,	right speech is the far shore.
Wrong action is the near shore,	right action is the far shore.
Wrong livelihood is the near shore,	right livelihood is the far shore.
Wrong effort is the near shore,	right effort is the far shore.
Wrong mindfulness is the near shore,	right mindfulness is the far shore.
Wrong concentration is the near shore,	right concentration is the far shore.
Wrong knowledge is the near shore,	right knowledge is the far shore.
Wrong liberation is the near shore,	right liberation is the far shore.

This, brahmin, is the near shore; this, brahmin, is the far shore."

Few are those amongst humans who cross over to the far shore,
But the rest of mankind only run about on this bank.   [Dh 85]

But those who, when the rightly taught Dharma, follow the Dharma,
These people will go to the far shore: the realm of death is hard to cross. [Dh 86]

Abandoning the dark states, the wise should cultivate the white.
Having come from the home into homelessness for a solitude hard to delight in.   [Dh 87]

Having given up sense-pleasures, having nothing, he should seek delight therein.

The wise should cleanse himself of mental defilements.   [Dh 88]

Of those whose mind is well developed in the awakening factors,
who, unclinging, delight in the letting go of clinging:
they, with influxes destroyed, attain nirvana in the world.   [Dh 89]

— evaṁ —

Both these Suttas make it very clear that *sīla,* as well as *samādhi* and *paññā* (all three of constitute the threefold training of the noble eightfold path) are part of the far shore, and <u>are not left behind</u> on the near shore after awakening. Here the symbolism of the far shore is a truly Dharma-centred way of life as taught by the Buddha.

8.3 ARHATS HAVE SUPREME MORAL VIRTUE

8.3.1   <u>Why then does the Buddha use the parable of the raft,</u>[113] or what is its correct import? The Commentary takes *dhammā* here to mean "good states," that is, calm and insight (*samatha,vipassanā*), citing **the Laṭutikôpama Sutta** (M 66) as an example of the teaching of the abandonment of <u>attachment</u> to calm,[114] and **the Mahā Taṇhā,saṅkhaya Sutta** (M 38) as one of the abandonment of <u>attachment</u> to insight.[115] A detailed discussion on why the parable of the raft is not about transcendence of morality has been done in the Introduction to **the Alaggadûpama Sutta** (M 22).[116] Only the main points will be mentioned here.

Buddhaghosa, in his Commentary, interprets the reference to going beyond "good states" more specifically as a warning regarding <u>the danger of being attached to meditative experience</u>, that is, the practitioner should let go of both calm and insight to go higher until desire-and-lust is abandoned, that is, liberation attained. (MA 2:109)[117]

8.3.2   However, when we examine the context of **the Mahā Taṇhā,saṅkhaya Sutta** (M 38) more closely, we will see that it is about the *dependent arising of consciousness*. In other words, it is about *doctrines*. Since the same parable—the raft—is mentioned here, it clearly shows that the parable also means that one should not cling to teachings as well, but take them as learning steps on the path of liberation.[118]

8.3.3   Keown gives an interesting discussion on the parables of **the Alagaddûpama Sutta** (M 22),[119] but does not touch on the remainder of the Sutta, that is, the section on doctrines.[120] We shall here look at some key points that attest to the fact that *arhats are not "beyond good and evil" in the sense of transcending morality*, but on the contrary they are supreme in their moral virtue.

8.3.4   The purpose of the section of <u>the six ground for views</u> of the Alagaddûpama Sutta (M 22.15-17) is to prevent the disciple from holding the self-view. All of the 5 aggregates—form, feeling, perception, formations, and consciousness—are to be regarded as "This is not mine; this I am not; this is not myself."[121] The first reflection directs one's mind away from craving; the second, away from conceit; and the third, away from wrong view.

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[113] See M 22.13-14/1:135 f @ SD 3.13.
[114] M 66.26-33/1:455 @ SD 28.1.
[115] M 38.14/1:260 f @ SD 7.10.
[116] SD 3.13 (3.2).
[117] Keown inadvertently cites this as "MA *1*:209."
[118] Bodhi interprets *dhammā* in the same way: "*dhamma* here [M 22] signifies not good states themselves, but the teachings, the correct attitude to which was delineated just above in the simile of the snake." (M:ÑB 1209 n255).
[119] Keown 1992:92-105; see SD 3.13 (3.2).
[120] M 22.15-47/1:135-142 @ SD 3.13.
[121] M 22.15-17/1:135 f @ SD 3.13.

The section on <u>non-self</u> (M 22.22-25) similarly points out that there is nothing really permanent that one can cling to.[122] At best, one could only cling to *a self-theory*, but this does not mean that there is something really permanent. <u>Since lust, or more specifically, sexuality, is the most selfish of human traits, clearly, for an arhat, who has destroyed the notion of self, is beyond it.</u>

This is especially clear from one of the epithets of the arhat given in the Sutta, that is,

> And how, bhikshus, is the monk **one who has broken the pillar**?
> Here, bhikshus, the monk has abandoned <u>craving</u>, cut it off at the root, made a palm stump of it, done away with it, so that it is no longer subject to future arising. That is how, bhikshus, the monk is one who has broken the pillar.   (M 22.33/1:139) = SD 3.13

8.3.5 In the section on "<u>not yours</u>" (*na tumhākaṁ*),[123] we who are not yet arhats are exhorted on the higher meaning of the training rule again taking the not-given:

> Therefore, bhikshus, <u>give up what is not yours</u>.[124] When you have given it up, it would be for your welfare and happiness for a long time.
> What is it that is not yours?
> **Form** is not yours. Give it up. When you have given it up, it would be for your welfare and happiness for a long time.
> **Feeling** is not yours. Give it up. When you have given it up, it would be for your welfare and happiness for a long time.
> **Perception** is not yours. Give it up. When you have given it up, it would be for your welfare and happiness for a long time.
> **Formations** are not yours. Give it up. When you have given it up, it would be for your welfare and happiness for a long time.
> **Consciousness** is not yours. Give it up. When you have given it up, it would be for your welfare and happiness for a long time.[125]   (M 22.40/1:140 f) = SD 3.13

Especially relevant here is the admonition, "Feeling is not yours. Give it up." If the non-arhat is admonished not to be attached to feelings, surely the quality would be perfected in an arhat.

8.3.6 This teaching is then followed by <u>the Jetavana simile</u> (M 22.41), where the Buddha says that although people keep taking away "grass, sticks, branches and leaves" from Jetavana and destroyed them, we do not harbour the notion that "People are carrying us off, or burning us, or doing what they like with us."[126] The meaning of the simile is that we lose nothing by letting go of our attachment to the aggregates (that is, the body and mind): indeed, we have more to gain, namely, liberation.

8.3.6 In fact, the Alagaddûpama Sutta closes with a description of *how the fetters are successively destroyed* leading to what type of sainthood this brings. Even for those who fail to walk the path, the the Buddha makes this remarkable declaration at the close of the Sutta:

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[122] M 22.22-25/1:137 f @ SD 3.13.

[123] *Na tumhākaṁ.* This section [40] forms a sutta of its own—**(Kāya) Na Tumha S** (S 12.37/2:64 f). The following 2 sections [40-41]—text and simile—form, in practically identical words*,* 4 suttas of similar names: the 2 **(Khandha) Na Tumha Ss** (S 22.33-34/3:33 f), but in the 2 **(Dhātu) Na Tumha Ss** (S 35.101-102/4:81 f) its theme is the 18 elements (6 internal sense-organs, 6 external sense-fields, 6 sense-consciousnesses). In all these 5 suttas, the word *dīgha,rattaṁ* is omitted in the closing stock phrase.

[124] Comy: It is the *attachment* or desire (*chanda,rāga*) to the five aggregates, not the aggregates in themselves, that should be given up: they "cannot be torn apart or pulled out." I have rendered *yaṁ* as "what" (which has a general sense) rather than as "whatever" which connotes that there are certain things that we do "own,' which would go against the teaching of *anattā.*

[125] Comy: Only an aggregate (form, etc) is the basis for the wrong concept of a self, since apart from them there is nothing else to crave for.

[126] M 22.41/1:141 @ SD 3.13.

In the Teaching well proclaimed by me, plain, open, clear, free from patchwork, those who have <u>mere faith in me and mere love for me</u>, are all bound for heaven."[127]

<div align="right">(M 22.47/1:142) = SD 3.13</div>

The Buddha, in other words, provides the chance of liberation for all.

9 What is meant by "beyond good and evil"

9.1 CANONICAL PASSAGES ON "BEYOND GOOD AND EVIL"

9.1.1 For a better understanding of the phrase *puñña,pāpa* and similar forms, let us examine some key passages in the early Suttas where they occur.

anavassuta,cittassa	For him whose mind is not soaked in lust,
ananvāhata,cetaso	for him who is unaffected by hate,
puñña.pāpa,pahīnassa	**for him who has abandoned both good and evil**,
n'atthi jāgarato bhayaṁ	for the wakeful, there is no fear. (Dh 39)

The Dhammapada Commentary glosses the phrase **puñña.pāpa,pahīnassa** here as: "For those with influxes destroyed (*khīṇ'āsava*),[128] who have abandoned good and evil by the fourth path"[129] (DhA 1:309), which clearly refers to the arhats. The first two lines of the stanza allude to lust and to hate respectively. Thus we can deduce that the third line (*puñña.pāpa,pahīnassa*) refers to <u>the overcoming of delusion</u>. Here it means the arhat has abandoned the conceit "I am," the desire, "I am," and the latent tendency, "I am."

9.1.2 The Commentary to **the Samanupassanā Sutta** (S 22.47)[130] explains "<u>this regarding</u>" (*ayaṁ ... samanupassanā*) as "regarding with views" (*diṭṭhi,samanupassanā*), and the notion "<u>I am</u>" (*asmî ti*) as the "threefold proliferation" (*papañca-t,taya*) of craving, of conceit, and of views. The two differ in that while "regarding" is a conceptually formulated view, the notion "I am" is a subtler manifestation of ignorance expressive of desire and conceit. The self-identity view is uprooted at stream-winning, but the notion "I am" is only fully destroyed by the path of arhathood. (SA 2:269 f)

[131]*yo 'dha puññañ ca pāpañ ca*	Who here <u>both good and evil</u>,
<u>*bāhetvā brahma,cariyavā*[132]</u>	<u>having pushed away</u>, who lives the holy life,
saṅkhāya loke carati	he wanders wisely in the world[133]—
sa ve bhikkhū ti vuccati	he is indeed called a monk [bhikshu]. (Dh 267)

A more idiomatic translation would be:

Who here, <u>having pushed away both good and evil</u>, and lives the holy life,
Wanders wisely in the world—he is indeed called a monk [bhikshu].

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[127] "Those who have mere faith in me and mere love for me," *yesaṁ mayi saddhā,mattaṁ pema,mattaṁ.* This phrase is found in Alagaddûpama S (M 22.47/1:143), **Bhaddāli S** (M 65.27/1:444) & **Kīṭā,giri S** (M 70.21/1:479), SD 12.1. Cf **Sarakāni S**s (S 55.24-25/4:375-380). Comy explains that this refers to the insight practitioners (*vipassaka puggalā*) who have not attained any supramundane state, not gaining even stream-entry, they are reborn in a heaven. On the other hand, we can take this passage as is, that is, anyone who has "mere faith, mere love" in the Buddha are reborn in a heaven, without going against the grain of early Buddhism. See M:ÑB 2001:1212 n274.

[128] The arhats have overcome the 4 *āsavas,* ie, the of (1) sense-desire (*kām'āsava*), (2) (desire for eternal) existence (*bhav'āsava*), (3) wrong views (*diṭṭh'āsava*), (4) ignorance (*avijjâsava*) (D 16.1.12/2:82, 16.2.4/ 2:91, Pm 1.442, 561, Dhs §§1096-1100, Vbh §937). For details, see SD 9 Introd (10d) n.

[129] *Catuttha,maggena pahīna,puññassa c'eva pahīna,pāpassa khīṇāsavassa.*

[130] S 22.47/3:46 f @ SD 26.12. See also **Khemaka S** (S 22.89/3:126-132), SD 14.13.

[131] Gandhāri Dh 68: *yo du baheti pavaṇa | vadava bramma-yiyava | sagha'i caradi loku | so du bhikhu du vucadi.* Mvst has lines ab as *yo ca kāmaṁ ca pāpaṁ cādhikṛtvā brahmacariyavāṁ,* "although seriously corrupted, clearly goes back to the same original" (Dh:G(B) ed J Brough 1962:192 = n68).

[132] Cf *vatavā brahma,cariyavā* (J 5:153, 6:181).

[133] Comy glosses *saṅkhāya* as *ñāṇena* (with knowledge) (DhA 3:393). I have freely rendered it as adv.

According to the Dhammapada Commentary, a certain sectarian who goes around collecting almsfood feels that the Buddha should call him a monk, too. The Buddha replies that one is not a monk merely because one lives on almsfood. A true monk is one who has pushed away both good and evil.[134]

9.1.3 In **the Sabhiya Sutta** (Sn 3.6), we again see the Buddha defining an arhat—here called simply "an ascetic" (*samaṇa*)—as one who has given up both good and evil:

samitāvi pahāya puñña,pāpaṁ	Mentally calm, <u>having given up good and evil</u>,
virajo ñatvā imaṁ parañ ca lokaṁ	free from defilement's dust, knowing this world and the next,
jāti,maraṇaṁ upātivatto	gone beyond birth and death:
samaṇo tādi pavuccate tathattā	such a one is called an ascetic in accordance with reality.
	(Sn 520)

And in the final verse of the Sabhiya Sutta, Sabhiya describes the Buddha himself as one who is untouched by both good and evil:

puṇḍarīkaṁ yathā vaggu toye na upalippati
evaṁ puññe ca pāpe ca ubhaye tvaṁ na lippasi
pāde vīra pasārehi, Sabhiyo vandati satthuno ti

> Just as a white lotus is unsullied by the water,
> Even so, <u>he is not soiled by either good or evil</u>:
> Please stretch forth your feet, O Hero! Sabhiya honours the Teacher!   (Sn 547)

The verb *lippasi* (vl *limpasi,* "is soiled") clearly alludes to lack of moral virtue, and its negative, *na lippa-si*, as such, refers to the presence of moral virtue.

The next stanza is a well known definition of the arhat found in **the Vāseṭṭha Sutta** (M 98), and which is also preserved in the Sutta Nipāta, the Dhammapada and the Gandhāri Dharmapada:[135]

yo'dha puññañ ca pāpañ ca ubho saṅgaṁ upaccagā[136]
asokaṁ virajaṁ suddhaṁ, tam ahaṁ brūmi brāhmaṇaṁ

> Who here <u>has gone beyond both good and evil and clinging, too,</u>
> sorrowless, stainless, pure: him I call a brahmin.   (M 98/43*/2:196; Sn 636; Dh 412)

The inclusion of "clinging" (*saṅga*), a synonym for lust (*rāga, taṇhā*), which the arhat has transcended, again shows his ethical perfection.

9.1.4 Another definition of the arhat is found in the ancient **Suddhaṭṭhaka Sutta** (Sn 4.4) and its commentary, **the Mahā Niddesa**:

na brāhmaṇo aññato suddhim āha	The brahmin does not say that purity is from another,
diṭṭhe sute sīlavate mute vā	in the seen, the heard, rules and rituals, or the sensed:
puññe ca pāpe ca anūpalitto	not clinging to good or evil,
attañjaho[137] *na-y-idha pakubbamāno*	having abandoned the grasped, he effects no karma here.
	(Sn 790; Nm 86)

Here again we see the arhat is said to have *his locus of control within himself*, and does not rely on any external agency for spiritual salvation. The fact that he does not hold on to good or evil is because he has "abandoned the grasped," that is, he has overcome greed, hate and delusion, and as such does not act,

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[134] DhA 19.7/3:391 f.

[135] *Yó du puñe ca pave ca | uhu ṣaga uvaca'i | aṣaga viraya budhu | tam ahu bromi bramaṇa* (Dh:G 46).

[136] SnA 469 seems to take *saṅgaṁ* in apposition to *ubho,* rather than in agreement, but, cf *ubhau saṅgāv upatyagāt* (Uv 33.29). KR Norman suggests "We should probably take *saṅgaṁ* as a masculine accusative plural." (Sn:N 265 n636, see also n35. Cf Dh:G 46.

[137] *Attan + jaho,* where *atta* (Skt *ātta,* pp of *ā* + √**dā,** to give), "taken, grasped." Opp *niratta.*

motivated by these unwholesome roots. The contexts of all these passages, most of which come from the oldest texts of the early canon—the Sutta Nipāta—is clear: the arhat (or the saint in general) is not above moral virtue, but is in fact the best exemplars of it.

9.2 THE KARMA THAT ENDS KARMA

9.2.1 **The Kukkura,vatika Sutta** (M 57.7) and **the (Vitthāra) Kamma Sutta** (A 4.232) contain <u>a fourfold classification of karma</u> according to their quality and results, thus:[138]

      (1) Black karma, black result;
      (2) White karma, white result;
      (3) Black and white karma, with both black and white result; and
      (4) Neither black nor white karma, with neither black nor white result.
                       (M 57.7/1:389 = SD 23.11) ≠ (A 4.232/2:230-237 = SD 4.13)

The last is <u>the karma that ends all karmas</u>.

  The first three categories of karma are those of the unawakened, that is, of all beings, except of the arhats. They are the numerous varieties and proliferation of action comprising the ten courses of unwholesome action, such as destroying lives, taking the not-given, sexual misconduct, wrong forms of speech, and negative mental states, and their respective opposites, that is, the ten wholesome courses of karma. These kinds of karma determine various kinds of good and bad life experiences and conditions, and their perpetuation. The events of the present life in turn create more good and bad karma or activate old ones, thus spinning the samsaric wheel endlessly. Karma has the tendency for *self-perpetuating,* keeping us in a karmic rut.

  The fourth kind of karma brings the exact opposite result. Instead of accumulating more karma, it leads to *the ending of karma*. This refers to the noble eightfold path or the seven awakening-factors, that lead to awakening. Sometimes, this fourth kind of karma is spoken of as <u>the intention</u>, based on non-greed, non-hatred and non-delusion, to abandon the other three kinds of karma.

9.2.2 Karma always has to do with happiness and suffering. Karma is the "cause," or better, "causes and conditions," whose results can be both happiness and suffering, and as long as there is karma, there will be fluctuation between these two states. All this describes the first three kinds of karma, that is, those of the unawakened. The fourth kind of karma is very different because it leads to the ending of karma, and thus to the complete ending of suffering.

  Although good karma results in happiness, *such happiness is tainted with suffering*, as it can be a cause of future suffering. Anyone who holds to a notion of permanence will, wittingly or unwittingly, experience happiness as potential suffering. For, nothing is permanent, and the reality is that *happiness* is the absence of suffering, and *suffering* the absence of happiness. When one understands the true nature of the two, that they are really the same side of the samsaric coin, then one is able to rise above them.

9.2.3 The fourth kind of karma is about *rising above the dichotomy of happiness and suffering*. For simplicity, we can perhaps also call this happiness, "higher happiness," one that has no potential suffering. It is not caused or conditioned by anything outside of oneself. To rephrase a Tibetan saying: <u>to seek happiness outside of oneself is like waiting for sunshine in a north-facing cave</u>.[139] This inner happiness truly frees one from suffering, and as such is untainted.

9.2.4 Elsewhere,[140] I have discussed these four categories in some detail in connection with two other sets of key terms of Buddhist virtue ethics, as follows:
      A *puñña* and *apuñña*/*pāpa* (good and evil);
      B *kusala* and *akusala* (wholesome and unwholesome), and
      C *sukka* and *kaṇha* (white and black, or bright and dark).

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[138] This section is based on Payutto 1993:81-91 (ch 5). For details of the 4 categories, see **(Vitthāra) Kamma S** (A 4.232/2:230-232), SD 4.13 esp (2).

[139] The original saying by Rangrik Repa ["the cotton-clad yogi of Rangrik"] Kunga Lodrö (1619-1683) is of a different context: "Expecting to realize non-conceptual wisdom, | Without praying to the precious master, | Is like waiting for sunshine in a north-facing cave, | That way, appearances and mind will never merge."

[140] **(Vitthāra) Kamma S** (A 4.232/2:230-232), SD 4.13 (2).

A summary here will suffice. **The arhat** is said to be one who has abandoned both *puñña* and *pāpa*, that is, he will not be reborn. The arhat is sometimes said to be *kusala.* Here, however, *kusala* and *puñña* are not coextensive: the state of an arhat may be regarded as *kusala,* but it cannot be *puñña.* Keown seems to argue that because the arhat is as good (*kusala*) as it is possible to be so, his happiness neither increases nor decreases, that is, it is of a supramundane quality. Keown associates happiness with *puñña,* which he calls the "experiential indicator or epiphenomenon" of *kusala.*

Because the arhat's happiness neither increases nor decreases the arhat is said to have abandoned *puñña* and *pāpa.*

> *Puñña* is a function of progress in *kusala,* since an *Arahat* no longer progresses in *kusala* it is meaningless to speak of him as producing *puñña.* He will, of course, continue to enjoy the secondary consequences of his virtue while he lives, but the experiential *quantum* of these consequences cannot be increased or decreased as they can for a non-*Arahat.*   (Keown 1996:124)

We will return to this point below [9.5].

9.3 KARMA, SUFFERING AND HAPPINESS

9.3.1 The ending of karma is not a uniquely Buddhist teaching, for it is a popular teaching in the Buddha's time. However, *how* this ending of karma comes about radically differs amongst the different systems. The Nirgranthas, for example, teach the principle of past karma, the ending of karma, and the mortification of the body in order to "wear out" the past karma. As **Payutto** points out, "If these three principles are not clearly distinguished from the Buddha's teaching they can easily be confused with it. Conversely, distinguishing them clearly from the principles of Buddhism can help to further clarify the Buddha's message." (1993:83)

9.3.2 In several Suttas, the Nirgranthas are represented as teaching that all feelings (joy, pain and neutral feeling) are entirely caused by past karma. Karma concretizes itself as the physical body, which as such is evil, and should be "worn out," got rid of. This is done through self-mortification, so that with the doing away of old karma, new ones do not arise. When suffering in overcome, feeling is overcome. When there is no more feeling, there is no more suffering.[141]

9.3.3 The Buddha however teaches something radically different: *that past karma is merely one of the factors in the totality of the causes and effects process*. Karma can indeed lead to the overcoming of suffering, but it must be the right kind of karma, that is, the karma that prevents the arising of more karma and thus leads to its ending. This practice of using karma to end karma has to be based on right understanding. Indeed it is wrong understanding to hold that there is some kind of permanent entity, such as the soul, that causes karma to arise through body, speech and mind. *Ignorance*, manifesting itself through greed, hate and delusion, is the cause of karma.

9.3.4 In summary, the general features of the fourth category of karma [9.2] are as follows:
(1) It is the path of practice that leads to the ending of karma, and is in itself a kind of karma.
(2) It is known as "the karma which is neither black nor white, bringing results that are neither black nor white, and that leads to the cessation of karma." (**Sikha Moggallana Sutta,** A 4.233/2:233)
(3) Non-greed, non-hatred and non-delusion are its root causes.
(4) It is based on wisdom and understanding of true reality, leading to blameless and beneficial action that is conducive to spiritual liberation.
(5) Because this kind of action is not directed by desire, ill will, or ignorance, nor by inaction due to fear, it is true altruistic effort, guided and supported by mindfulness and wisdom.
(6) It is wholesome action (*kusala,kamma*) on the level known as *transcendent wholesome action*, that is, the actions of the arhat.
(7) In terms of practice, it is called the eightfold path to the ending of suffering, the fourth of the four noble truths, the seven awakening factors, or the threefold training, depending on the context; it is also referred to in a general sense as the intention to abandon the first three kinds of karma.

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[141] **Devadaha S** (M 101,2/2:214), SD 18.4; **Niganṭha S** (A 3.74/1:220); cf **Dhānañjāni S** (M 2,29/2:193).

9.3.5 Point (5) needs further comment. For most people, <u>craving</u> (*taṇhā*) or greed is the motivating force. Generally they believe that more greed means more intensive and competitive action, and conversely if there is no greed, there would be inertia and indolence. This is clearly a very narrow, almost cynical, view of human nature, that they are incapable of altruistic acts.

In fact, desire is an impetus for both action and inaction. When it is searching for objects with which to feed itself, desire is an impetus for action. This kind of action tends to generate exploitation and contention. However, at a time when good and altruistic actions are called for, desire will become an incentive to inaction, binding the self to personal comfort, even if only attachment to sleep. Thus, it becomes an encumbrance or stumbling block to performing good deeds. If ignorance is still strong, that is, there is no understanding of the value of good actions, desire will encourage inertia and negligence. For this reason, desire may be an incentive for either an exploitative kind of activity, or a lethargic kind of inactivity, depending on the context. (Payutto 1993:85)

9.3.6 Desire need not be always unwholesome: it really depends on its root and goal. If both the root and goal of an action are wholesome (say, one is inspired to meditate desirous of mental peace), then such an action, being rooted in a wholesome desire is as such a morally virtuous and beneficial act. In fact, in Buddhist terminology, such a desire or zeal is called ***chanda,*** sometimes translated simply as "desire" (neutral or negative) or "zeal, aspiration" (positive). In a positive sense, the term is also given as "wholesome desire" (*kusala,chanda*) or "Dharma-based desire" (*dhamma,chanda*).

The mental equivalent of <u>zeal</u> (*chanda*) can be said to be <u>zest</u> (*pīti*), also translated as "joyful interest," because it energizes one to stay happily focused on one's work or goal. "Zeal" can be said to be the physical (bodily and verbal) manifestation of zest, and both are powerful factors for the arising of spiritual happiness. Such a happiness is different from joy that is other-dependent, since the "other" is always impermanent, unpredictable and one has no control over it. Spiritual happiness, as already mentioned, is an inner happiness.

9.3.7 Inner happiness is a vital support for inner stillness leading to **samadhi**, one-pointedness of mind, with which one would then be able to see directly into the true nature of reality, and that is how one puts as end to karma. A mind that is the slave of desire—one that seeks external objects for gratification—is never free. Only when, through wisdom, the mind is independent of greed and hate (the dichotomy of like and dislike), that it is truly liberated from karma.

9.4 THE ARHAT IS A PARAGON OF MORAL VIRTUE

9.4.1 The Buddha is not only morally virtuous, but from the early Buddhist texts, we know that he is "accomplished in knowledge and conduct" (*vijjā,caraṇa,sampanna*).[142] The arhats, and even the learners on the path, are recollected thus:[143]

<u>*supaṭipanno*</u> *bhagavato sāvaka,saṅgho*	The Blessed One's community of disciples <u>keeps to the good way</u>;
<u>*uju,paṭipanno*</u> *bhagavato sāvaka,saṅgho*	the Blessed One's community of disciples <u>keeps to the straight way</u>;
<u>*ñāya,paṭipanno*</u> *bhagavato sāvaka,saṅgho*	the Blessed One's community of disciples <u>keeps to the true way</u>;
<u>*sāmīci,paṭipanno*</u> *bhagavato sāvaka,saṅgho*	the Blessed One's community of disciples <u>keeps to the proper way</u>.[144]
yad idaṁ cattāri purisa,yugāni	These are the four pairs of persons,

[142] This is one of the 9 virtues of the noble sangha: see **Aṭṭha,puggala S 1** (A 8.59/4:292), SD 15.10a.

[143] For a detailed study of this recollection, see **Aṭṭha,puggala S 1** (A 8.59/ 4:292 = D 33,3.1(3)/3:255), SD 15.-10a. For commentarial explanations, see Carter 1984:49.

[144] There seems to be an abrupt break here, with the mention of "These four pairs of persons…" which seems to refer back to some missing passage, which evidently is found in the Skt version: see SD 15.10a 3: Saṅghânusmṛti & **Aṭṭha,puggala S 1** (A 4:292 = D 33,3.1(3)/3:255), SD 15.10a.

aṭṭha,purisa,puggalā	the eight individuals,
esa bhagavato sāvaka,saṅgho	this Blessed One's community of disciples is
āhuneyyo	worthy of offerings,[145]
pāhuneyyo	worthy of hospitality,
dakkhiṇeyyo	worthy of gifts,[146]
añjali,karaṇīyo	worthy of salutation with the lotus-palms,
anuttaraṁ puñña-k,khettaṁ lokassâ ti	a supreme field of merit for the world.

(M 7,7/1:37; A 6.10.4/3:286)

The main quality pervading this reflection on the Sangha clearly is moral virtue (*sīla*). In short, the teachings and the conduct of the Buddha and the saints are the best examples of moral virtue that are worthy of emulation.

    9.4.2 John Ross Carter aptly closes his study of "Beyond 'Beyond good and evil'" with these words:

> In conclusion, to speak of an arahant, of a Buddha, or a Pacceka Buddha as having "gone beyond good and evil" really tells us more about what interpretation of "good" is being used—it tells us little about the way the Theravāda tradition has valued such persons, and little, too, about the person at the moment of Nibbāna-realization. Whether or not such persons function within the realm of what one might call ethics depends upon whether one's notion of ethics is adequate.[147] And this is a problem of the English medium of intellectual heritage, not of Theravāda Buddhists.

(1984:51)

9.5 THE SAMAṆA,MAṆḌIKĀ SUTTA

    9.5.1 A key passage in **the Samaṇa,maṇḍikā Sutta** (M 78) is sometimes misconstrued as meaning that one who has attained nirvana or an arhat transcends ethical values, that he is "beyond good and evil."[148]

> And, carpenter, **where do these wholesome habits end without remains**?
>   Of their ending, too, it has been spoken: here, carpenter, a monk is *morally virtuous*, but he *is not made of moral virtue*,[149] and he understands, as they really are, the liberation of mind and liberation by wisdom, where these wholesome habits end without remains.

(M 78.11(3)/2:27) = SD 18.9

    We have here an example of the language of awakening. The usage of *sīla,mayā* here is by way of "intentional language."[150] *Sīla,maya* literally means "made of moral virtue," but here used figuratively to mean that the arhat's psychological and spiritual state is no more dependent on his karma, that is, good or bad actions; hence, he is "beyond good and evil." In this sense, too, he does not identify (*tam,maya*)[151] with his precepts; for, there is really nothing to identify with, after all. On the other hand, the unawakened person as a rule identifies with his actions: "*I* am doing; this is *mine*; he is doing something to *me*," and so on.

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[145] *Āhuneyyo.* That is, worthy of receiving sacrifices or offerings. The Skt cognate *āhavanīya* refers to that which was offered as an oblation as in *āhuneyy'aggī*, one of the 3 brahminical sacrificial fires (the one in the east).

[146] *Dakkhiṇeyyo.* Traditionally refers to honoraria or gifts to teachers after completion of tutelage under them. Specifically refers to offerings made for the benefit of the departed by way of dedication of merits to them.

[147] See Carter 55 n46.

[148] Henri Van Zeyst, eg, holds such a view (1961:143 f) [8.1].

[149] *Nirodho pi nesaṁ vutto, idha thapati, bhikkhu sīlavā hoti no ca sīla,mayo.* Of *sīla,maya,* Comy says that, being endowed with moral habits, there is nothing further than this to be done (MA 3:270). "[B]ut he does not identify with the moral virtue" is based on M:ÑB 651 ad loc. On the various meanings of *–maya,* see VvA 10.

[150] See **Dh 97**, SD 10.6 esp (5).

[151] See **Vīmaṁsaka S** (M 47,13/1:319), SD 35.6.

9.5.2 Furthermore, the passage should be taken in its right context, that is, <u>the tenfold rightness</u> (*sammatta*) the noble eightfold path along with right knowledge and right liberation.[152] **Analayo**, in his *Satipaṭṭhāna: The Direct Path to Realization* reflects the mind of traditional Buddhists:[153]

> …a close examination of the discourse [the Samaṇa,maṇḍikā Sutta] reveals that this particular statement does not refer to the abandoning of ethical conduct, but only to the fact that the *arahants* no longer identify with their virtuous behaviour.[154]
>
> Regarding the other passages, which speak of "going beyond good and evil," one needs to distinguish clearly between the Pāli terms translated as "good," which can be either *kusala* or *puñña*. Although the two terms cannot be completely separated from each other in canonical usage, they often carry quite distinct meanings [6.3-6.4].[155] While *puñña* mostly denotes deeds of positive merit, *kusala* includes any type of wholesomeness, including the realization of *Nibbāna*.[156]
>
> What *arahants* have "gone beyond" is the accumulation of karma. They have transcended the generation of "good" (*puñña*) and of its opposite "evil" (*pāpa*). But the same cannot be said of wholesomeness (*kusala*). In fact, by eradicating all unwholesome (*akusala*) states of mind, *arahants* become <u>the highest embodiment of wholesomeness (*kusala*)</u>. So much is this the case that, as indicated in the *Samaṇamaṇḍikā Sutta,* they are spontaneously virtuous and do not even identify with their virtue.   (Analayo 2003:258; emphasis added)

9.5.3 **Bhikkhu Bodhi** further instructively summarizes the discussion here by noting "This passage shows the arahant, who maintains virtuous conduct but <u>no longer identifies with his virtue</u> by conceiving it a 'I' and 'mine.' Since his virtuous habits no longer generate kamma, they are not describable as 'wholesome'." (M:ÑB 1286 n775)

9.5.4 By way of summary, it is important to understand that moral virtue is *not* abandoned "after it is cultivated." Moral virtue is not a product of a process, but the willingness and ability to respond wholesomely to others and the environment as a result of our own wholesome mind. As unawakened beings, we have to *deliberately* direct our mind towards morally virtuous deeds and states, but for the arhat, it is *spontaneous* nature. Furthermore, the unawakened *depends* on moral virtue (as good karma) for their wellbeing, but the arhat is no more "made of moral virtue," since his mind is liberated from duality.

9.6 HOW TO LIVE BEYOND GOOD AND EVIL

9.6.1 Living in the world is a daily struggle between good and evil, meaning that we have choices to make in whatever we do or do not do. Such choices are never consistent: *we are moved mostly by feelings rather than by reason* (just think of some decisions, especially the important one, we have made!). My point is that if we *feel* something is "good" for us we will do it or accept it. But on an unawakened level, <u>good is merely what we *think* it is</u>. For that reason, very often good works and prayers do not work.

On a simple daily level, <u>being good is how well we *respond* to others when they fail us</u>, or when they are in need, or when they lack moral virtue. If we respond in a way that does not harm ourselves, nor the other, nor society as a whole, then, to that extent we are good.

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[152] D 3:271, 292; M 1:42; A 5:212.

[153] See Analayo 2003:258 f, & **Beyond Good and Evil**, SD 18.7.

[154] As the M:ÑB n below confirms. **Wijesekera** explains that the practitioner should "master morality, but not allow morality to get the better of him" (1994:35). Cf **Vīmaṁsaka S** (M 47.13) where the Buddha points out that although he is possessed of a high level of virtue he does not identify with it (*no ca tena tam,mayo*) (M 47.13/-1:319). (Based on Analayo's fn)

[155] According to Carter, some degree of overlap exists between *kusala* and *puñña* in the context of the threefold volition, but a clear distinction between both terms can be drawn in regard to a person's qualities (1984:48).

[156] In fact, according to D 3:102, the realization of nirvana is the highest among wholesome phenomena; cf Premasiri 1976:68. Cf also Collins 1998:154 & Nanayakkara 1999:258. (Analayo's fn)

9.6.2 <u>How about when we ourselves fail</u>, or when we are in need, or when we lack moral virtue? Similarly, if we accept ourselves in a way that does not harm ourself, nor others, nor society as a whole, then to that extent we are good.

Doing good is a way of letting go of evil and preventing mental distraction. When we truly do good, we are not distracted by worldly ways; we do not take the world as our standard; we do not measure others. **Compassion** is when we reach out to others even when (or especially when) they do not deserve it.[157] We are really doing good when we begin to understand what <u>self-accountability</u> is: *that our actions bear the potential of like fruit;* that there is nowhere in the world or outside where we can hide or run away from our evil deeds.

9.6.3 We should live with the perception (*saññā*)[158] that future Buddhas are watching us,[159] as the devas, too, are watching us.

> There is in the world no secret of one who does an evil deed.
> You yourself, O human,[160] know what is true and what is false!
> Alas! My friend, you, the witness, look down upon your own goodness!
> How can you hide the evil that there is in the self from the self?
> <u>The devas and the Tathāgatas [Buddhas thus come] see the fool living falsely in the world.</u>
>
> (Adhipateyya Sutta, A 3.40/1:147-150)

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[157] Being kind to others when they *deserve* it is more likely to be <u>gratitude</u> than compassion, but both of which can and should overlap.

[158] That is, as a Recollection of the Buddha (*Buddh'ānussati*).

[159] S 16.9/2:210-214; A 6.62/3:402-409.

[160] For regular self-reflection, insert your own or another's name here.

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